Commentary
November 1999

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Books in Review

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Commentary
November 1999

Letters from Readers

The Constitution

To the Editor:

In "Triangulating the Constitution" [July-August], Gary Rosen is correct that the essence of the conservative position on judicial review is that "there is no more fundamental liberty than democratic self-government," while liberals have long been defenders of judicial activism. It is odd, therefore, as he points out, to see recent books by liberal constitutional scholars Bruce Ackerman, Akhil Reed Amar, and Mark Tushnet proposing additional means of amending the Constitution and thereby restraining policy-making by judges. It is even odder, however, that a conservative like Mr. Rosen should berate them for doing so. We can be suspicious, but good ideas should not be rejected just because they come from liberals, who may be right, even if perhaps for the wrong reasons.

The difficulty of amending the Constitution under Article V (two-thirds vote of each House and ratification by three-quarters of the states) has made this means of political control of judicial policy-making more theoretical than real. We should, therefore, welcome proposals to make amendment easier so as to permit an effective political response to judicial activism. If it is true, as we claim, that here the people rule, Amar's statement that "what the popular sovereign has made, it may 'disestablish at will,'" should not be seen as shocking, but as a simple statement of fact. Only human will, not fate, can bind us to unworkable and harmful arrangements.

Mr. Rosen's objection to Ackerman's modest "Popular Sovereignty Initiative"—a second-term President may propose constitutional amendments that become effective if approved by Congress and by the electorate in two consecutive presidential elections—on the ground that it may result in enhanced federal power is mistaken for several reasons. First, he is not correct that it is "difficult . . . to find a warrant in the Constitution" for the great power the federal government currently exercises. The commerce clause, far from being a "seemingly narrow" provision, has proved sufficient to enable Congress to regulate virtually anything by the simple expedient of regulating the interstate movement of goods and people. The Constitution also gives Congress the power to tax "to provide for the general welfare," which, aided by the Sixteenth Amendment, is also a grant of virtually unlimited power.

Second, it is unrealistic to expect the Supreme Court, an arm of the federal government, to serve as an effective means of limiting federal power. The primary cause of the increased nationalization of policy-making and the loss of state autonomy in recent decades has not been acts of Congress but Supreme Court usurpations of the policy-making power. It is the Court, not Congress, that has deprived the states of the power to restrict abortion, provide for prayer in schools, aid religious schools, limit the distribution of pornography, assign students to neighborhood schools, maintain an effective system of criminal procedure, prohibit flag-burning, and so on endlessly. Our overwhelming present need, in terms both of federalism and democracy, is protection from the Supreme Court—a committee of nine lawyers unelected and holding office for life, strongly tempted to self-aggrandizement, and making basic social-policy decisions for the nation as a whole—not protection by the Court from the people we elect to Congress.

Mr. Rosen is on target in his criticism of Amar's argument for "incorporation" of the first eight amendments (meant to apply only to the

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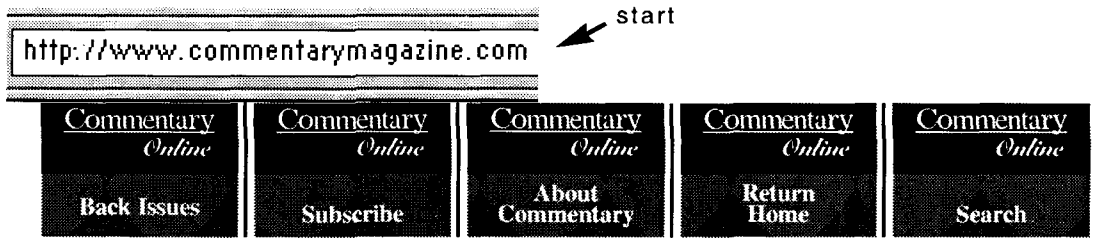

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federal government) into the Fourteenth Amendment so as to make them also applicable to the states. Amar's proposal for amending the Constitution by national refer-enda, however, permitting a reassertion of the will of the people against the will of a majority of the Justices, is a move in the right direction. There may be reasons for opposing it, but the danger that it would weaken federalism, as Mr. Rosen argues, is not one of them.

Mark Tushnet, a self-declared Marxist and leader of the Critical Legal Studies school, is nonetheless an exceptionally able, independent, and original thinker, and his *Taking the Constitution Away From the Courts* is, Mr. Rosen notwithstanding, an extremely valuable contribution to the cause of limiting judicial power. Tushnet is deeply disaffected with the Court because it has not abolished economic inequality by enacting a redistributionist program, has disallowed some racial-preference programs, and has invalidated some "campaign-reform" measures. Because the Court can no longer be relied on to enact a Left-liberal agenda, he concludes that the country would be better off without judicial review. Conservatives as well as liberals, as Mr. Rosen illustrates, can be ambivalent about popular government—the Justices might some day, the dream is, enact conservative policies—but Tushnet, to his credit, has apparently seen the light.

Mr. Rosen concedes that abolishing judicial review "might give states and localities maneuvering room for a time"—something of an understatement—but he opposes it, incredibly, on the ground that "Congress would quickly take up the slack." The abolition of judicial review, returning decision-making on basic social-policy issues to the people of each state, would be the single most important step we could take to return the country to political and social health. There is little reason to think that Congress would or could "take up the slack," and if it did—by, for example, prohibiting prayer in the schools—we would have only ourselves to blame and, unlike under rule by judges, the means of correction in our hands at the next election.

LINO A. GRAGLIA
University of Texas
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TO THE EDITOR:

Gary Rosen speaks of "the now-familiar shorthand" according to which "liberals stand for activism in constitutional matters, conservatives for restraint." I would not deny that this is a fair approximation of conventional wisdom, but Mr. Rosen fails to appreciate to what extent it is an inadequate description of reality.

Thus, he asserts that liberals are emphatic that "democratic majorities must yield when their actions fly in the face of fundamental liberties." By contrast, conservatives are said to hold that "there is no more fundamental liberty than democratic self-government, and judges who strike down its results should exercise extreme caution." Recent Supreme Court practice—to say nothing of the animus of the pre-New Deal Supreme Court to legislation regulating economic activity—casts serious doubt on this dichotomy. For example, in the opinions of the Rehnquist Court striking down government affirmative-action programs and electoral redistricting plans motivated by a desire to enhance the prospects of minority-group candidates, I think Mr. Rosen will search largely in vain for any expression of regret that the will of legislative bodies is being forced to yield. Nor will he find any such expression in recent opinions of the Supreme Court that, in the name of federalism, have placed rather extraordinary limits upon efforts by congressional majorities to regulate the practices of state governments.

Further, in his discussion of the doctrine of "incorporation," pursuant to which elements of the federal Bill of Rights have been made applicable to the actions of state governments, I believe that Mr. Rosen may have

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fostered a serious misapprehension. He writes that the notion that the "privileges or immunities" clause of the Fourteenth Amendment makes the Bill of Rights applicable to state governments "did not surface in a Supreme Court opinion—and a dissenting one, at that—until 1947." He thus leaves the impression that the work of incorporation was undertaken by the liberal New Deal and Warren Courts. But this is false. The process of incorporating selected portions of the Bill of Rights was well on its way before Franklin Roosevelt's Justices turned the Court in a liberal direction. Indeed, many of those rights that we consider most fundamental—the right to a fair trial plus the rights of free speech, freedom of the press, and the free exercise of religion contained in the First Amendment—were held applicable against state governments pursuant to the Fourteenth Amendment, if not specifically pursuant to the privileges or immunities clause, before Roosevelt's influence upon the Court was felt.

MARK KOZLOWSKI
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New York City

GARY ROSEN writes:

Lino A. Graglia is right to insist that good ideas should not be rejected just because they come from our ideological opposites. A useful corollary is that we should not accept *bad* ideas even when they are endorsed by our (usually) like-minded friends. On this occasion, unfortunately, Mr. Graglia shows himself to be in the grip of several very bad ideas.

The authors whose books I discussed would be deeply surprised to learn—from Mr. Graglia, of all people—that their proposals would not significantly expand the scope of national policy-making. That, after all, is the whole point of bypassing the Constitution's arduous, federalism-based requirements for amendment. Whatever the differences among Bruce Ackerman, Akhil Reed Amar, and Mark Tushnet, all three wish to make it easier for a simple majority of the American people to declare its will on the great issues of the day, especially the constitutional questions now handled exclusively by the federal courts.

Mr. Graglia welcomes this prospect. As he sees it, national up-or-down votes on abortion, pornography, criminal procedure, and the like would be far preferable to the policy-making of activist judges, whose rulings in recent decades, he correctly points out, have run roughshod over the prerogatives long enjoyed by state and local governments. But the populist schemes supported by Mr. Graglia would hardly restore the status quo ante. Once invited to decide all manner of constitutional questions, national majorities—or their representatives in Washington—would be every bit as tempted as federal judges to ignore the demands of federalism, and with the same ill effects. As I wrote in my article, "the critical question is not how best to develop a national standard on a given issue but whether and to what degree a national standard should prevail in the first place."

I share Mr. Graglia's frustration with the shameless overreaching of the federal judiciary, but I do not think the solution lies in some sort of ongoing plebiscite on our constitutional arrangements, the ugly, polarizing consequences of which are not difficult to foresee. Say what one will about the Constitution's admittedly cumbersome provisions for amendment, they do ensure that any change in our frame of government reflects a national consensus, not just the will of a passing national majority. Do we really want such fundamental matters decided in a *less* inclusive and deliberate way?

As for fixing the federal judiciary, I cannot think of a better remedy than appointing good judges and,

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as the necessary precondition for that, electing a President who knows what good judging consists of. This may lack the radical majoritarian appeal of inviting the American people to flex their sovereign muscles (or, for that matter, of encouraging Congress to believe that the commerce clause allows it to regulate "virtually anything") but—unlike Lino Graglia—I am not eager to see our constitutional democracy transformed into a democracy pure and simple.

Mark Kozlowski takes me to task for not providing a complete discussion of how the Supreme Court came to incorporate the Bill of Rights against the states. But that would have taken me very far afield. I simply wished to make the point that Akhil Reed Amar's novel argument for incorporation stands on exceedingly shaky historical legs.

As for instances of conservative judicial activism: yes, they exist, both in pre-New Deal Supreme Court rulings that struck down economic regulations and (arguably) in some of the present Court's decisions on affirmative action. But all this pales next to the long list of usurpations by modern liberal activists, many of which are nicely catalogued by Mr. Graglia.

Iraq

To the Editor:

I would like to respond to Bret Louis Stephens's review of my book, *Endgame* [July-August]. The strength of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) rested in the legitimacy of its mandate, i.e., the Security Council resolutions that provided the legal framework for resolving the situation in Iraq. These resolutions do not prohibit Iraq from possessing conventional military capability, nor do they dictate the composition of the Iraqi government, two issues that Mr. Stephens faults me for not considering.

Many of my critics, Mr. Stephens included, have failed to appreciate the logical inconsistency in trying simultaneously to pursue a policy of disarmament in accordance with Security Council resolutions and a policy of regime removal, unilateral in nature and lacking any internationally accepted mandate. The fact is that sooner or later the United States must commit itself to one path or the other. I have chosen to support the path that seeks stability and security through reliance on internationally accepted norms of diplomacy. I invite Mr. Stephens and the others who embrace the policy of regime removal to consider where this policy has gotten us: stalled, isolated, and presiding over a deteriorating situation from which there is no clear exit strategy.

Comparing the moral cost of continuing the tyrannical rule of Saddam Hussein with the moral cost of containing and eventually removing him from power is something Mr. Stephens apparently thinks too unimportant to consider. But I have trouble justifying a policy of containment that results in the death every month of thousands of innocent children under the age of five. Not even Saddam Hussein has killed off the Iraqi people at such a rate.

Saddam has been so effective in holding on to power that any plan that does not provide for massive U.S. military intervention stands little chance of success. Yet there is no consensus, either at home or abroad, for such action. The inconclusive nature of the current American military campaign in northern and southern Iraq, combined with the unjust nature of the continued campaign of eco-

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nomic sanctions, only serves to undermine efforts to implement Iraq's disarmament obligations. Today we face a stalemate in Iraq that, given the unabated suffering of the Iraqi people, is as morally unacceptable as it is politically unsustainable.

Iraq must be disarmed of its weapons of mass destruction. On this there is a consensus, even in the Security Council. But compliance is currently assessed in terms of quantity, requiring Iraq to be rid of 100 percent of its proscribed capability before economic sanctions can be lifted. The impossibility of assessing Iraqi compliance along these lines is reflected in the current stalemate. I have proposed that Iraq's disarmament obligations should instead be assessed along qualitative lines—that is, whether or not it continues to possess any effective weapons of mass destruction or the means of producing them. This would not only capitalize on the considerable achievements made by UNSCOM over the last seven-and-a-half years, but also assist the Council in developing a consensus on whether Iraq is in compliance. Without a consensus in the Security Council, any solution is unrealistic.

Mr. Stephens has seen fit to denigrate my abilities as a formulator of policy without any appreciation of the depth of knowledge and understanding of these issues I bring to the table. However, rather than attacking the messenger, Mr. Stephens and others should spend more time evaluating the message. In my book, I push for diplomatic engagement with Iraq and the lifting of economic sanctions in return for the resumption of meaningful, qualitative arms control. While it does not satisfy those who seek the demise of Saddam Hussein, such a policy furthers the long-term interests of the United States, Israel, and the people of the Middle East more than any other option being considered, and in a more realistic and attainable fashion.

SCOTT RITTER
Hastings, New York

BRET LOUIS STEPHENS writes:

Scott Ritter faults me for not appreciating "the depth of [his] knowledge and understanding" of Iraq and its various programs to develop weapons of mass destruction. Alas, his letter brings me no closer to any such appreciation.

The crux of Mr. Ritter's case for reengaging Saddam diplomatically is that it is a "more realistic" policy option than is removal by force, for which there is "no consensus." But what consensus is there for the course he proposes? Is there a serious politician or pundit in America today who advocates, as Mr. Ritter does, an "Iraqi Marshall Plan," including (as he writes in his book) "military-to-military contacts to assist in the modernization and training of the Iraqi military"? Perhaps Kofi Annan and his cohorts entertain such ideas; otherwise, Mr. Ritter stands pretty much alone.

But put plausibility aside. What are the intrinsic merits of his proposal? He writes that it is based on "internationally accepted norms of diplomacy." I fail to see the virtue in this. Since the end of the Gulf war, Saddam has very effectively bent diplomatic norms to his purpose, which helps explain why he remains in power. Indeed, the basic flaw in our strategy toward Iraq rests in the fact that until quite recently we allowed considerations of "legitimacy"—that is, the approving stamp of the UN Security Council—to trump considerations of efficacy. Hence the UNSCOM team Mr. Ritter led was continually hampered by UN mandarins who, in the interest of "consensus," agreed to Iraq's patently illegal demands to put certain "presidential" sites off-limits to inspection. Similarly, opposition at the UN several times dissuaded the Clinton administration from taking timely military action to force Iraq into compliance with its disarmament obligations.

Mr. Ritter is also clearly exercised by the human cost of economic sanctions against Iraq, though why he takes me to task on this point I do not understand, since my review ventures no opinion on the subject. But let me offer one now: a sanctions policy that punishes ordinary Iraqis is indeed a poor substitute for muscular action to remove the source of the problem—the Iraqi regime. Barring such action, however, sanctions make better sense. The West is not to blame for the cruelties inflicted on Iraqi children, and while sanctions may not punish Saddam personally, they do help prevent Iraq from reemerging as a major regional power. *Pace* Mr. Ritter, the problem with sanctions is not that they are immoral but that they are insufficient.

Finally, there is Mr. Ritter's arms-control idea: qualitative, not quantitative, assessment. This proposal would hand Iraq a significant public-relations victory by tacitly acknowledging that it may, after all, have been in compliance with its disarmament obligations (and hence that punitive U.S. military action was needless and wrong). It would further embolden Saddam to reembark on his illicit weapons programs while facilitating his means of doing so. And as for capitalizing "on the considerable achievements made by UNSCOM over the last seven-and-a-half years"—well, what achievements? Judging from Mr. Ritter's own account, UNSCOM inspections rarely seem to have yielded results.

Mr. Ritter complains that I fail to spend enough time evaluating the message of his book. I daresay I read it more carefully than he read my review, else his letter would have addressed my central criticism. Let me repeat it for him here: "Mr. Ritter's 'deal' would enable Saddam to rebuild Iraq's once-fearsome military machine, rehabilitate him as a legitimate actor in the region, betray Arab allies of ours who have steadfastly opposed him, and send a signal of weakness to other would-be regional hegemons around the world."

America & the Holocaust

TO THE EDITOR:

I was sorry to see from his review that David G. Roskies disliked my book, *The Holocaust in American Life* [Books in Review, September]. But given that he and I are at

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odds on most issues within American Jewry, as well as within the American polity at large, this was hardly surprising. In any case, he is entitled to his opinion. What he is not entitled to do—at least not without being called to account—is repeatedly and willfully to make demonstrably false assertions about the book's contents. A few examples.

• Mr. Roskies attributes to me the view that "the campaign to vilify Hannah Arendt for her 1963 book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, . . . was launched from Israel." This is a complete fabrication, and Mr. Roskies knows that it is. In the eight pages I devote to the controversy over *Eichmann in Jerusalem* there is not a word—not a syllable, not a comma—that even hints at such an absurd conclusion. Pure invention on Mr. Roskies's part.

• "Novick," Mr. Roskies writes, "even blames the Zionists for doing away with the last vestiges of authentic Jewish American speech patterns, replacing the beloved *yarmulke* with *kippa* and the homey *shabbes* with the harsh-sounding *shabbat*." I devoted a paragraph to the "Israelization" of American Jewish consciousness following the 1967 war. This is a very unoriginal observation, frequently made, among other places, in the pages of COMMENTARY. Among other examples of this reorientation, I cited the changes in language that Mr. Roskies mentions. There is no hint in this discussion of disapproval of these changes, let alone of "blame." (In any case, as what Mr. Roskies describes as "a resolutely secular Jew," who grew up in a completely secular Jewish home, *yarmulke* was not "beloved" for me, nor *shabbes* "homey.") But Mr. Roskies's polemic demands that I be "blaming Zionists," so he simply invents this, along with my alleged affect toward these changes in language.

• Mr. Roskies says that "in an outburst of passion" I ask why "the American Jewish community does not labor to rescue the millions upon millions of innocent children who are dying of starvation today." This, he says, "is the purest cant . . . [and] a wild distortion of the truth to boot."

I asked no such (rhetorical) question, and Mr. Roskies knows that I did not. The wild distortion is his, and it is willful. The passage in question appears, as Mr. Roskies knows, in a chapter that has nothing to do with Jews. Jews' relationship to the Holocaust—and the "Jewish-specific" lessons they draw from it—is discussed separately in other chapters. The discussion of starving children appears in a chapter on the alleged "universal" lessons of the Holocaust—"the abortion holocaust," military intervention in Bosnia, etc.—lessons to which *non*-Jews are said (sometimes) to subscribe. One of those that I discuss is "the lesson of indifference," and it is in this "all-American" context that I take up the question of world hunger. (I would not dream of suggesting that this is a special obligation of Jews—or, in any case, one that Jews have the resources to address seriously.) It is hard to think of a more unconscionable reviewing practice than to cite what an author says about one subject and pretend that it applies to a quite different subject.

• Mr. Roskies says that all the "main villains" in my book are "either 'Zionists' or 'neoconservatives,' or both." His example of this is that I fail to mention Lucy S. Dawidowicz's 1975 book, *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945*, which, Mr. Roskies says, "set a gold standard" for Holocaust studies. Dawidowicz, he says, "appears here only as a neoconservative 'expert on Communism.'"

It is quite true that in *The*

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Holocaust in American Life I make no mention of *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945*. In a different sort of book—one that attempted a review of scholarly writings and how they were received—I would have done so. If I had written that sort of book, I might have noted that whatever the merits of Dawidowicz's book, most professional historians did not think well of it. I might have also noted (anticipating Mr. Roskies's characterization of my book) that the leading Israeli historians of the Holocaust, Yehuda Bauer and Israel Gutman, criticized Dawidowicz's book for its anti-Zionist bias.

It is also true that in discussing Jewish agencies' concern about the association of Jews with Communism I mentioned that Lucy Dawidowicz was, in the 1940's and 1950's, the American Jewish Committee's expert on Communism. But rather than this being the "only" way in which she is mentioned, as Mr. Roskies alleges, it is one of *eleven* occasions on which she is cited or quoted. The others include: (1) her recollections of her wartime attitudes toward Germans; (2) her defense of American Jews against the charge of inaction during the war; (3) her objection to the charge that FDR "abandoned" the Jews; (4) her criticism of Zionists for "pressuring" survivors to immigrate to Israel (criticism which I said was too harsh); (5) her criticism of Israel for accepting German reparations while declining responsibility for Palestinian refugees; (6) her equation of clemency for the Rosenbergs with clemency for Hermann Goering; (7) her denunciation of Jews who voted for Walter Mondale over Ronald Reagan; (8) her denial that the Armenian genocide could be meaningfully compared to the Holocaust; (9 and 10) her criticisms of various Holocaust curricula. That in the face of all this, Mr. Roskies can say that Dawidowicz appears in my text "only as a neoconservative 'expert on Communism'" suggests that his zeal to falsify is quite beyond rational control.

Let me end with an apology. I had been skeptical about articles in COMMENTARY in recent years reporting that the academic study of literature has been taken over by radical nihilists. These ideological zealots, COMMENTARY has reported, have no interest in what authors actually wrote—the plain words on the printed page. They cheerfully turn texts upside down and inside out to serve their political purposes. This is not a matter of anything that could (generously) be called "interpretation." Practicing what they call "creative misreading," they make flatly false assertions about what is in the text, confident that trusting students will defer to their authority, even if their assertions are clearly contradicted by the author's words. As I say, I was skeptical about these claims, but the review of my book by Mr. Roskies, who teaches literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary, has made a believer out of me. So I apologize to COMMENTARY for my former doubts—and congratulate it on the subtlety with which it chose to illustrate the breadth of the postmodernist takeover.

PETER NOVICK
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

DAVID G. ROSKIES writes:

A radical nihilist; an ideological zealot; an agent of the "postmodernist takeover" who has successfully infiltrated the bastion of neoconservatism—now that Peter Novick has flushed me out, I suppose my only hope is to plead guilty to the lesser charge of creative misreading.

Mr. Novick is narrowly right on his first point: he did not *explicitly* state that the campaign to vilify Hannah Arendt was launched from Israel. Rather, it was the Anti-Defamation League, his *bête noire*, that, as he tells it, launched the first prong of the attack, with Nahum Goldmann, head of the World Zionist Organization, responsible only for the second. If I creatively fused one with the other, it is because, ten pages later, Mr. Novick quotes "a long-

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time official of the Anti-Defamation League" who wrote in a letter to a friend "that by the 1970's organized American Jewry had become 'an agency of the Israeli government . . . follow[ing] its directions from day to day.'"

Since a private letter, even from someone in the know, hardly constitutes proof, Mr. Novick also cites corroborating evidence from "changes" in "popular Jewish attitudes": the supposed "Israelization" of American Jewish speech; the "mandatory" presence of Israeli artifacts in every American Jewish living room; and, of course, the blind and totally uninformed American Jewish "commitment to Israel." I invite readers of Mr. Novick's book to judge for themselves whether or not there is any "hint in this discussion of disapproval of these changes."

American Jews, Mr. Novick argues throughout his book, have become increasingly insular, using the "lessons" of the Holocaust and the defense of Israel as reasons to abdicate their proper, liberal agenda. In the penultimate chapter, he extends this argument to the American polity as a whole. Why do the deaths each year of over ten million children from hunger and preventable disease make no moral claim on the American conscience? Because, he suggests, they are insufficiently "holocaustal." The Jews, in other words, are guilty not only of having betrayed themselves but of having unwittingly contributed to the self-betrayal of all socially conscious Americans.

I thank Mr. Novick for collating the references to Lucy S. Dawidowicz that lie scattered throughout his book. (There are actually quite a few more, if you count the footnotes.) But what do they add up to? Dawidowicz comes across as—at best—a political pundit. This, in a book about the Holocaust in American life that devotes nine full pages to Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Since Mr. Novick labors so valiantly to defend Arendt's reputation but fails to learn anything from Dawidowicz's example, a brief comparison may be in order.

Hannah Arendt remained wedded to a narrow conception of European Jewish life, which she enunciated in her essay, "The Jew as Pariah." From its purview, she issued a sweeping indictment of the entire European Jewish leadership in wartime. As for Adolf Eichmann, he must have cut a banal figure indeed next to the demonically seductive Martin Heidegger, the philosopher and Nazi sympathizer who was Arendt's teacher and former lover. But none of this matters for Mr. Novick: to him Arendt represents the historian as gadfly, and in defending her he is defending his own Left flank.

Lucy Dawidowicz, by contrast, spent half a lifetime researching and writing *The War Against the Jews*,

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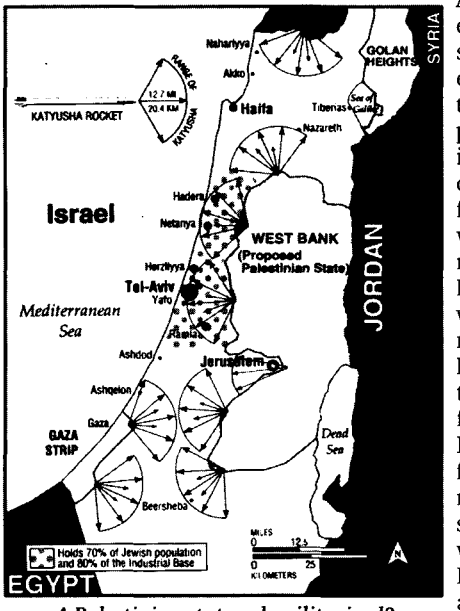
Even those most sanguine about the Oslo Accord, the understanding between Israel and the Palestinians, are agreed that the Palestinian entity to be formed will have to be demilitarized. A demilitarized Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and Gaza Strip, it is believed, would obviate any military threat to the state of Israel.

What are the facts?

Israel threatened by enemies. Israel is a very small country. Including the Golan and the "West Bank," it is only one-half the size of San Bernardino County in California. Israel has been in a "cold peace" with Egypt since 1978 and has also concluded a peace treaty with Jordan. Other Arab states are still in a declared or undeclared state of war with Israel. Iran, Moslem though not Arab, is the most determined and deadly of them all. It lurks in the background, its foremost military and political objective being the destruction of the state of Israel.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), with which Isreal's Rabin government has signed a "peace agreement," is a terror organization that has only one purpose: to kill Jews and to destroy the state of Israel. While the latter objective is beyond its reach, it has been most successful in the former. It seems almost incomprehensible that a group as supposedly level-headed as a previous government of Israel would have entered into a "peace agreement" with such an organization. Unfortunately, though not surprisingly, events since the famous "handshake" confirm such skepticism. Despite statements to the contrary, the PLO has still not complied with Israel's main requirement, namely that it forswear the clauses in its "covenant" that call for the destruction of Israel. Arafat and his lieutenants continue to make blood-curdling speeches to the Arab public, beyond Western TV cameras, in which they re-assert their old goal of destroying Israel in "stages"—first by creating a Palestinian state to foment an allied all-out assault against the critically vulnerable Jewish state.



A Palestinian state—demilitarized?

The myth of demilitarization. The assumption that "Palestine" would be demilitarized is not tenable. The Arab nations would not allow it, even if the Palestinians themselves so desired. Also, the Palestinian entity would have thousands of trained soldiers, camouflaged as police. They could be helicoptered in minutes to positions on the border with Israel, with armored forces from Syria reaching them within the same night. But such mobilization of the "demilitarized" Palestine wouldn't be required. The weapons of preference of Arab terrorists are the Soviet-made Katyushas, highly effective missiles, truck-mounted and mobile, ideal for hit-and-run raids against Israel. Israel could not prevent them from flooding Palestine. A look at the map makes clear that these rockets, short-range though they may be, would dominate the heartland of Israel. Easily moved and hidden along Israel's new eastern borders—to be increased from less than 40 miles in length to over 200 miles—these Katyushah rockets would rain destruction over most of Israel. They would cover in their entirety Israel's narrow waist that holds 70% of the Jewish population of the country, 80% of its industrial base, its only international airport, and its most important military installations.

The Arabs living in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") danced on the roofs of their homes when Iraqi Scud missiles fell on Tel Aviv during the Gulf War. Since the signing of the "peace agreement" they have continued to engage in terror and murder against the Jews. Only incurable optimists can believe that an independent Palestine would become a peaceful neighbor of Israel. If Israel ceded the Gaza Strip—the invasion route since before biblical times—and Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") to its sworn enemies it would make the country indefensible and Israel would have laid the groundwork for its own destruction. Tanks, warplanes, and missiles would only be needed for the final mopping-up process. In the meantime, mortars and Katyushas located on the Judean ridges—Israel's proposed new borders—would suffice to paralyze life and industrial and military activity in Israel. One can only hope that ultimately Isreal's leaders will clearly understand this danger and that they will not make concessions that will endanger the security of their country.

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1933-1945. On the strength of this great book, she fully achieved the authority to speak to Americans, and to American Jews, about the Holocaust; in her, it is not too much to say, the scholar became the moral counterpart to the eyewitness. In the course of writing that book, moreover, Dawidowicz become a religiously observant Jew and a passionate defender of Israel. Perhaps that is why Mr. Novick declines to honor her, for to do so would cede something of the moral high ground that he is so determined to occupy with so much bluster.

American Opera

TO THE EDITOR:

In "Opera USA" [July-August], Terry Teachout states that Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* is not suitable for big opera houses. But I have heard it performed effectively a number of times in the barn-like New York State Theater and two years ago in the huge Chicago Lyric Opera house. The problem in New York was that the conductor, James Conlon, drowned out the singers and generally directed the piece as though it were Richard Strauss's *Elektra* rather than a basically light, lyrical, and relatively minor work.

Mr. Teachout may wish to consider what I see as a fundamental problem with modern operas, whether American or foreign. Most great operas are based on love stories—grand passions fulfilled or thwarted. The geniuses who wrote these works could understand and feel these passions. In our own ironic age, people simply do not fall in love with the intensity and even the madness of earlier times, so we have instead operas about Nixon in China or Gandhi in South Africa.

A friend of mine has likened grand opera to Latin: a dead language that can still be read with pleasure but is now difficult to write well. Until passionate love reasserts itself, I fear that no more great operas will be written.

ROBERT W. WILSON
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

In Terry Teachout's discussion of American opera, one misses any mention of Marc Blitzstein's *Regina*. Mr. Teachout refers only to the composer's *The Cradle Will Rock*, correctly pegging it as "left-wing agitprop," more politics than music. Blitzstein surely thought he was tearing up the capitalist turf in *Regina* as well, but he produced a gorgeous and compelling tragedy on terms more human than political, and the music all but made it so.

CLAYTON H. FARNHAM
Atlanta, Georgia

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

Robert W. Wilson may be right about *Susannah*—I did not see the other productions to which he refers—but I suspect the question of its "size" has as much to do with the homespun subject matter as the slightly overblown scoring. As for Mr. Wilson's strictures about the place of romantic love in grand opera, I am inclined to agree, except that I think he means "postmodern" rather than "modern." Prior to the rise of minimalism, many of the best opera composers of the 20th century were very nearly as preoccupied with love as their predecessors. Of course there were well-known exceptions, most notably Benjamin Britten, but even Britten was dealing with passion in such operas as *Billy Budd* or *Owen Wingrave*.

As for *The Cradle Will Rock*, it is agitprop and then some, but it is musically memorable in its brusquely jazzy way, something I find not to be true of *Regina*. Perhaps the fault is mine, since other connoisseurs of American opera have had good things to say about Marc Blitzstein's adaptation of Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes*. A good production might change my mind.

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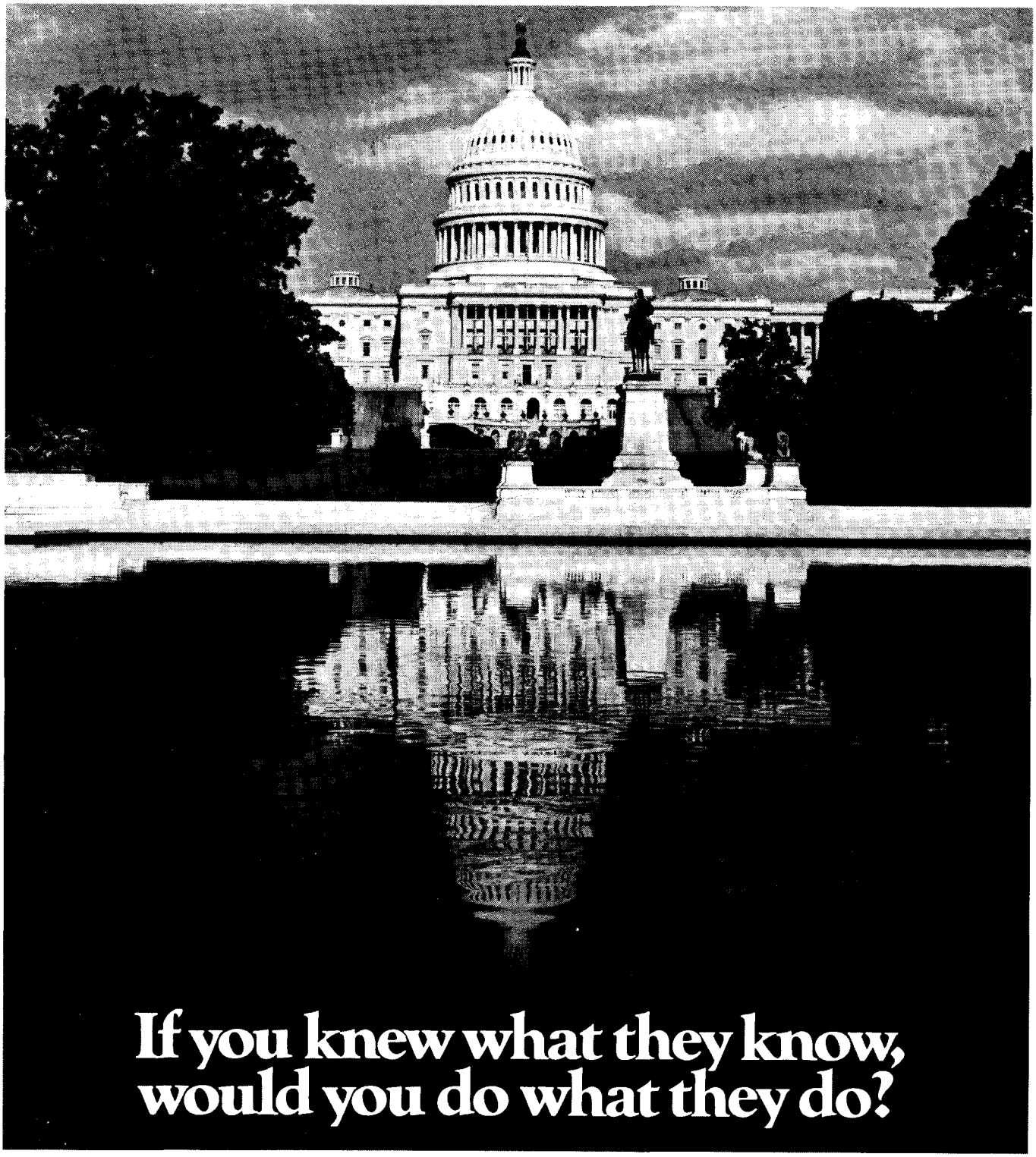

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Commentary
November 1999

California and the End of White America

Ron Unz

At some unknown date during the late 1980's, and with no attention paid whatsoever, whites became a minority in California.

The silence surrounding this momentous event, without precedent in American history, is quite understandable. It was the late Reagan era, a time of economic boom and the approaching end of the cold war, and racial issues had temporarily receded from visibility. Then, too, California enjoyed a reputation as being among our most cosmopolitan, open, and optimistic states, better known for its flourishing economy and hippies and beaches than for racial conflict; this reputation had been confirmed in 1982 when the nation's largest state came within a hair's-breadth of electing Tom Bradley as America's first black governor.

Besides, on the historic transition date in question, *official* statistics would have indicated a shrinking but still substantial white majority. The bizarre framework of federal racial classification—which divides all mankind into Asians, blacks, Hispanics, and "other" whites—places blond, blue-eyed, third-generation Argentinian-Americans who speak not a word of Spanish in the category of minorities, while dark-skinned Muslim immigrants from Egypt, speaking not a word of English, are labeled members of the white majority. In this Alice-in-Wonderland perspective, the huge inflow into California of hundreds of thousands of Iranians and Armenians and Egyptians had acted to "whiten" the state, partially balancing the huge simultaneous inflow of Vietnamese and Mexicans and Somalis.

But the irrationality of official statistics did not prevent Californians of European ancestry from recognizing that they were fast becoming a minority within their own state—and their unease about this situation would soon be reflected in the political landscape. During the 1994, 1996, and 1998 election cycles, three ballot measures with strong racial and ethnic overtones—Propositions 187 (illegal immigration), 209 (affirmative action), and 227 (bilingual education)—explosively probed the delicate fault lines of California's new multiethnic society. Each of these widely popular initiatives drew far more media coverage and generated far greater emotion than did the candidates for statewide or national office who shared their same ballot. Taken as a whole, they are certain to loom large in any political history of late-20th-century America, long after those candidates have been forgotten.

Because the three measures dealt with questions inevitable in an ethnically diverse society, examining the very different campaigns surrounding them can tell us much not only about California today

Ron Unz, *here making his first appearance in* Commentary, *has written on public policy for the* Weekly Standard, *the* Nation, *the* Wall Street Journal, *and other publications. A Silicon Valley entrepreneur, he was the author of California's Proposition 227, the "English for the Children" initiative to dismantle bilingual education, which passed in 1998.*

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but, since national demographic trends lag behind those of California by only a generation or two, about how our larger political world is likely to evolve as Americans of European ancestry fall increasingly into minority status during the first half of the new century. Two alternate futures present themselves—which might be labeled the new American melting pot and the coming of white nationalism—and the recent politics of California lends some plausibility to each. America's continued viability as a nation may well depend upon which of these two paths we choose.

II

UNTIL THE late 1960's, California had probably had less experience with racial politics than most of America's other large states. Its Asian community, although the nation's largest, was still negligible in size and power, amounting to just 2 or 3 percent of the general population and lacking significant political influence. Hispanics had not yet been invented as an American racial group by federal bureaucrats, and so were perceived much like Italians, Arabs, or other darker Caucasians of marginal social status; in any case, their numbers were probably well under 10 percent of the state, with an economic profile ranging from the most prestigious landowning families to poor migrant farmworkers who crossed national borders without notice or concern. And as for blacks, America's prototypical minority, few lived in California prior to World War II, and even afterward their numbers never rose above 7 percent, by far the lowest such proportion of any major state in the union. Thus, in 1970, government statistics would have described California as 90-percent white, and most Californians, on the basis of their own experience, probably would have concurred.

Then, over the next decade and a half, some two million documented foreign immigrants—over a quarter of America's total—entered the state, further augmented by a continuous flow of illegals and additional millions of foreign immigrants relocating from other states. By 1990, California's Latino population had more than tripled; Asians had increased almost fivefold.

Most of these immigrants were young, and often they came from societies where seven or eight children to a family were not uncommon. Although the cultural influence of their new American environment quickly reduced their typical family size to three or four children, the immigrant birthrate still far outpaced that of affluent whites, many of whom had anyway already passed their child-bearing years. This large difference in natural increase meant that, by 1991, California was recording more Hispanic than white births, despite an official white population more than twice as large; if immigrants officially classified as white were excluded from the total, the white/nonwhite ratio would have been more lopsided still.

It was, inevitably, in the public schools that the earliest signs of ethnic transformation became visible to California's middle class. Within just a few years, large urban school districts had shifted from overwhelmingly white to overwhelmingly minority, with many of the remaining "whites" actually being immigrants or their children. As early as the 1980's, some 140 different languages were spoken in California schools.

This made for a potentially dangerous situation, ripe for scapegoating. For even as the Latino and Asian populations were growing exponentially, California's electorate remained overwhelmingly white. Immigrants, being younger and less affluent, with low rates of naturalization and few ties to public issues, mostly ignored the political process: although, by 1990, Latinos and Asians constituted some 40 percent of the state's population, they were just 10 percent of its voters. This political vacuum permitted a small number of Left-liberal ethnic activists to stake an uncontested claim to represent the views of ordinary Asians and Latinos. Despite the fact that these activists, generally second- or third-generation Americans, had no real ties to the immigrant population, their shrill cultural and linguistic demands—often modeled on those of their black allies—regularly served to annoy and unnerve California's white political majority.

AND YET, until the early 1990's, California's rapidly transforming and potentially combustible society seemed to be leading a charmed life. Elderly whites might grumble at the vast number of "foreigners" everywhere; communities undergoing especially rapid ethnic succession might exhibit bouts of "English Only"-ism; white students at UCLA might jokingly refer to themselves as attending the "University of Caucasians Lost among Asians." But all in all, ethnic tensions seemed surprisingly minimal.

One helpful factor here was California's ongoing economic boom, fueled by the massive Reagan defense buildup, which provided jobs for everyone from white aerospace engineers to Mexican construction laborers. The powerful agribusiness

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lobby, heavily dependent on undocumented farm labor, also exerted enormous influence in state politics, ensuring that moderate pro-business leaders like then-Senator Pete Wilson hewed to a position of *de-facto* support for high levels of illegal immigration.

And it was not just moderate Republicans like Wilson who held pro-immigrant views; so, too, contrary to stereotype, did many prominent conservatives. The entrepreneurship and economic dynamism of most immigrants, the strong family values and Catholic faith of Latinos, the fierce anti-Communism of Cuban and Vietnamese refugees—these did not go unnoticed during the Reagan era. In 1984, during the heated debate over the Simpson-Mazzoli Immigration Act, none other than right-winger Patrick J. Buchanan had denounced the proposed legislation as mean-spirited toward hard-working illegal immigrants, and as late as the 1990 publication of his conservative call-to-arms, *Right from the Beginning*, Buchanan was still casually referring to illegal immigrants (let alone to legal ones) as stalwarts of American optimism and economic advancement. Fiery Bob Dornan had originally unseated a Democratic incumbent in his Orange County congressional district thanks to a local influx of anti-Communist Vietnamese refugees, and his unbending anti-abortionism regularly won him many Latino votes; in his appearances on Rush Limbaugh's radio show, Dornan scathingly denounced anti-immigrant activists.

If the Right could find little fault with immigrants during this period, liberals and the Left often showed greater hostility. Environmentalists pushing for slow-growth economic measures often locked horns with Latino (and black) elected officials from working-class districts where the paramount issue was jobs rather than "quality of life"; the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), America's premier anti-immigration lobby, had been founded in 1978 by radical environmentalists. In another sector of the liberal universe, unionized white workers found themselves being priced out of the market by increasingly skilled immigrants. Even Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers urged a crackdown on Latino illegal immigrants.

But the main source of conflict, especially in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, was friction between immigrants and blacks. During the 1980's, as large numbers of Mexicans and Central Americans began displacing blacks from their traditional neighborhoods, the competition for housing, jobs, and political power became fierce. At the same time, Asian shopkeepers, primarily Koreans, had begun to dominate small-scale commerce in black neighborhoods, replacing previous (usually non-black) owners or reopening abandoned properties. Such changes were natural, even beneficial; but, at a moment when high unemployment and the growing impact of the crack epidemic had produced considerable racial xenophobia among blacks, they generated severe resentments.

All this formed a background to the huge, spontaneous riot in Los Angeles that followed the 1992 acquittal of police officers in the Rodney King case and that inspired similar, smaller riots elsewhere. With the breakdown of public order, large numbers of poor Central American immigrants near downtown Los Angeles joined in the looting, allowing the politically-correct media to portray the riots—falsely—as a united, multicultural uprising against the white power structure. In fact, the rioters were overwhelmingly black, and their primary targets were immigrant Hispanics and Asians, particularly Korean shopkeepers, who lost some $400 million in destroyed property. (The freeing of a Korean shopkeeper convicted of killing a black teen had been a strong contributing factor in the riot.)

The effect of the 1992 riots on California's ethnic politics cannot be exaggerated. Although few white neighborhoods were directly threatened and fewer whites were killed or injured, the plumes of smoke from burning buildings and the gruesome television footage almost completely shattered the sense of security of middle-class Southern Californians. Suddenly, the happy "multicultural California" so beloved of local boosters had been unmasked as a harsh, dangerous third-world dystopia. Scenes of Uzi-toting Korean shopkeepers exchanging fire with shadowy rioters made even California's so-called "model minority" seem alien and threatening. And the large numbers of Latinos arrested (and often summarily deported) for looting caused whites to cast a newly wary eye on gardeners and nannies who just weeks earlier had seemed so pleasant and reliable. If multicultural Los Angeles had exploded into sudden chaos, what security could whites expect as a minority in an increasingly nonwhite California? The often divisive rhetoric of self-appointed ethnic activists hardly provided comfort.

Other factors, too, contributed to the tension. The end of the cold war and the resulting defense build-down had led to a deep recession in early-1990's California, and the shrinking economic pie produced a sense of statewide despair. For many

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whites, this economic decline came to be symbolized by the images of unemployed Latino laborers—large numbers of them undocumented—who gathered in small knots each morning at suburban street corners, hoping for contractors to give them a day's work. A twenty-year real-estate bubble had also burst, and aging suburbanites, now thinking of relocating elsewhere, were suddenly faced with the reality that their homes—their principal financial asset—were worth only a fraction of what they had been a few years earlier. Orange County, just south of Los Angeles, had originally grown to maturity as a leading receptacle of earlier white flight; now several of its own larger cities like Santa Ana and Anaheim had suddenly become heavily populated by immigrant Latinos and were increasingly poor.

Terrified of social decay and violence, and trapped by collapsed property values, many whites felt they could neither run nor hide. Under these circumstances, attention inevitably began to focus on the tidal force of foreign immigration.

III

THE FIRST California political figure to raise the immigration issue was Tom Houston, a liberal Democrat from Los Angeles who had served as deputy mayor under Tom Bradley and was now attempting to succeed his ex-boss. From late 1992 through the primary election in the spring of 1993, Houston focused relentlessly on the fiscal and social threat posed by illegal aliens, ranging from the increased burden on the city's social-welfare system to crime and gang violence.

Although Houston lost, his positions generated strong populist support and attracted major media coverage. Moreover, his ideological credentials as a liberal Democrat provided cover for others eager to raise the same issue but fearful of being branded "racist." Within months of the mayoral race, a whole raft of immigration-related measures had been introduced into the state legislature, and top-ranking politicians, presumably driven by polls and focus groups, were eagerly presenting their soundbites on the local evening news. Senator Barbara Boxer, a Left-liberal Democrat, urged the construction of a border fence with Mexico, to be manned by California's National Guard; Senator Dianne Feinstein, a moderate Democrat, advocated a huge increase in the border patrol; and Pete Wilson, California's moderate Republican governor, proposed denying U.S. citizenship to the American-born children of illegal immigrants.

Wilson's main innovation was to frame the issue as one of fiscal responsibility: he argued that the cost of providing government services to illegal immigrants was prohibitive. This had some plausibility, since most such immigrants were poor and the taxes they paid probably did not cover the cost of the education their children received in the public schools—though the same could be said of all lower-income residents, immigrant and nonimmigrant alike. But other claims advanced by Wilson—that, for instance, California's generous welfare arrangements served as a magnet to impoverished foreigners—were false and demagogic: nearly all immigrants came for jobs, not welfare.

Plausible or not, the governor's charges resonated widely among California's recession-plagued white electorate. Despite clear visual and personal evidence that Latinos and other immigrants were enormously hard-working and filled every available job niche of the California economy, the common white stereotype of darker-skinned peoples as especially prone to government dependency proved irresistible. "Stopping welfare for illegal immigrants" became a powerful slogan.

The results were immediate. Wilson, whose popularity during the recession had plumbed all-time lows, saw his approval rating shoot up almost overnight. Because his initial targets were illegal immigrants, pro-immigrant politicians such as members of the state's Latino caucus were trapped between the difficulty of defending illegality and the embarrassment of falling silent before Wilson's attacks upon portions of their own community. By late 1993, illegal immigration seemed to have established itself, alongside crime and education, as a major potential issue in the 1994 statewide elections.

The sharp distinction between illegal and legal immigrants would become a standard tag line of nearly all political rhetoric during the immigration wars of the next two or three years, both in California and around the nation. Wilson's own exceptionally effective campaign ads featured gritty black-and-white footage of illegal aliens scurrying across the Mexican border like an army of subhuman invaders, but then balanced this harsh image with reverent shots of the Statue of Liberty and of legal Latino residents taking the oath of U.S. citizenship. Pro-immigrant groups merely provided different body language for the same basic message: legal immigrants good, illegal immigrants bad.

Yet, despite strong rhetorical consensus on this distinction, both perceptions of reality and reality itself suggested something quite different. For one thing, activist anti-immigration groups like FAIR or Voices of Citizens Together (VCT) saw no dif-

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ference between the two categories, and merely used illegals as an effective stalking horse for an attack on immigration in general. Then, too, public sentiment in California was quite confused on the matter, with polls showing that most voters believed the overwhelming majority of immigrants were illegal even though illegals probably comprised no more than 20 percent of the total. To most people, "illegal immigrant" was simply a synonym for "poor immigrant" or "bad immigrant" or perhaps even "Mexican immigrant."

The history of immigration policy added another layer of complication, not to say irony. Legislation championed by then-Senator Wilson in 1986 had granted amnesty to some three million illegal immigrants, the bulk of them residents of California. Thus, by 1994, a significant fraction of California's "good" legal immigrants had only recently been "bad" illegal immigrants, having been transformed by a stroke of the pen. And this amnesty led to still further complications, since many newly legalized Mexican workers had subsequently brought their wives and children to live with them, generating a maze of intermingled relationships: in a typical immigrant household the husband might be an amnestied legal resident, the wife and older children illegals, and the younger children native-born American citizens.

But all such details and nuances were to be submerged completely as California's 1994 election campaign eventually became a massive referendum on the single subject of illegal immigration. In the spring of that year, a fringe group of anti-immigrant activists led by a failed accountant named Ron Prince had quietly begun to gather signatures to qualify the "Save Our State" (SOS) voter initiative for the November ballot. Under its later, official designation as Proposition 187, the measure became a watershed event in the national politics of race.

The initiative banned all nonemergency government services for illegal immigrants and their children—a simple and reasonable-sounding proposal until one realized that it would force the immediate expulsion of hundreds of thousands of immigrant children from public schools throughout California. In one draconian clause, the measure stipulated that mothers who attempted to use false documents to keep their children in school would receive mandatory five-year prison sentences; in another, it required teachers and doctors to report immediately to the INS any individuals they "suspected" of being illegal immigrants, thus raising the specter of a wave of ethnic witch-hunts. Reflecting its grassroots origins, the measure was poorly drafted and highly ambiguous, and was written in explicit defiance of a 1982 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Plyler* v. *Doe*, requiring public education for all children, documented or otherwise.

None of these seemingly fatal flaws lessened the overwhelming popularity of Proposition 187, which represented to most voters a revolt against a governing elite whose economic and social policies had brought the Golden State to its knees. Although initially skeptical, Wilson gradually embraced the proposal, ultimately making it the centerpiece of his own reelection campaign—so much so that by election day, according to some polls, more voters were aware that Wilson supported 187 than that he was the state's incumbent governor or much of anything else about him.

The campaign itself was exceptionally divisive, among the most bitter in the state's history. With even California's "moderate" governor calling for the expulsion of 300,000 children from California schools, implicit sanction was given to far more extreme words and deeds. At one point, Proposition 187 chairman Ron Prince told an audience of conservative activists that "you are the posse and SOS is the rope," while others regularly declared that the measure would finally drive the encroaching hordes of illegal aliens back to Mexico. Among immigrant families ignorant of American law, frightening rumors spread that the initiative authorized physical attacks on the undocumented, a perception reinforced by the unfortunate coincidence that "187" was also American police code for "homicide." The suggestion of a popular conservative talk-show host that the state offer a cash bounty for each "illegal immigrant" shot proved that such anxieties were not entirely unfounded.

Unwise or provocative behavior by *anti*-187 groups fed in turn both fear and backlash among whites. In October 1994, a coalition of grassroots pro-immigrant groups led a protest march and rally of 70,000 mostly immigrant Latinos through Los Angeles, perhaps the largest political demonstration in California history. Although the event was entirely peaceful, many of the marchers carried flags from their various Latin American countries of origin, and the images of that sea of foreign flags in downtown Los Angeles, endlessly reprinted and retelevised, seemed to confirm the worst suspicions of white Californians that they were losing control of their state to unassimilable aliens. Coming just three weeks before the election, the heavily covered march guaranteed the initiative's passage.

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THE SWEEPING 59-percent victory of Proposition 187 in November 1994 represented a political earthquake. Not only did its coattails carry Governor Wilson—who before he embraced the measure had been the most unpopular incumbent in California history—to a lesser landslide of his own, but Republicans gained a majority in the state assembly for the first time in three decades and picked up four seats in California's congressional delegation. The very fact that the highly flawed initiative had triumphed in the face of universal opposition by the state's editorial boards—and condemnation by many prominent national conservatives like Jack Kemp and William J. Bennett—only heightened the impact. Success succeeds, and California Republicans believed that they had found a magic formula for long-term political realignment.

To some concerned observers, the active ingredient in that formula seemed, rather, an incipient form of white nationalism. But heady Republicans ignored such concerns, just as they discounted fears of a minority backlash. Since implementation of the blatantly unconstitutional measure was quickly blocked by federal court challenges, they reasoned that the vote would remain essentially symbolic, and that immigrant anger would surely fade. They also pointed out that, although Wilson's Latino vote had been cut in half from 1990, his black support had risen to a full 20 percent, remarkable for a GOP candidate. At least in California, Republicans saw the immigration issue as attractive not just to whites but to some minorities as well.*

Nor were Republicans alone in drawing such conclusions. Senator Dianne Feinstein, California's most prominent Democrat, had herself effectively used the immigration issue to survive a surprisingly strong challenge by her opponent Michael Huffington; in content and style, her campaign's television barrage of immigration ads had been almost indistinguishable from Pete Wilson's. Although Feinstein did ultimately declare herself against Proposition 187, her opposition was grudging and late, and following the measure's triumph she immediately repositioned herself as the national champion of massive cuts in *legal* immigration, hoping to outflank Wilson and the Republicans on that emerging front. Against illegals, she also proposed the immediate introduction of a mandatory National Identity Card, together with the annual fingerprinting of every man, woman, and child in America. As for Bill Clinton, who read the same election returns and the same polls, he soon declared his support for sweeping "immigration-reform" legislation in Congress, featuring the most drastic cuts in entry numbers since 1924.

IV

EVEN AS national political leaders were digesting the sudden prominence of the immigration issue, a second ethnically-charged initiative entered upon the California stage.

For several years, two obscure academics had been trying to attract interest in their proposed measure banning governmental affirmative action, but without success or visibility. Now, in the wake of Proposition 187 and its national impact, the media had begun to recognize the political potential of proposals from such unlikely sources, and by the early months of 1995, the so-called "California Civil Rights Initiative," targeted for the 1996 ballot, was being widely hailed as the next big thing in California and the hottest of national hot-button issues. According to early media accounts, fearful and angry whites, the driving force behind Proposition 187 and the national Republican sweep in 1994, had found a new and hardly surprising goal: ending the entrenched system of racial discrimination against white people known as affirmative action.

Initial polling figures on the proposed measure, later designated Proposition 209, indicated the expected high levels of support among white Californians. More startlingly, they also revealed almost equally strong support among both Asians and Hispanics, and a near-even split among blacks, historically the group that benefited the most from affirmative action. Gun-shy Democratic leaders, previously unshakable in their support of these controversial programs, now viewed the initiative as an unstoppable political freight train, to be avoided rather than directly opposed.

Even Willie Brown, California's long-time Democratic Speaker of the Assembly and perhaps America's most powerful black elected official, began to consider support for an effort to place the

* The fault line between native-born and immigrants in California paralleled almost precisely the line separating whites and blacks on the one hand from Asians and Latinos on the other, thus heightening the racial character of the immigration issue. This was not (and is not) the case elsewhere. New York, for example, was second only to California in its concentration of legal and illegal immigrants, and suffered from even greater economic and welfare problems. But for a number of reasons, including the much more variegated makeup of New York's illegal immigrant population, which numbered multitudes of Irish, Italians, and Africans in addition to Asians and Latinos, attacks there even on illegal immigrants never much entered the portfolio of Republican-party leaders. Even at the height of the immigration wars, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani defied national party leaders by publicly defending his city's population of undocumented residents. A measure like Proposition 187 was a complete nonstarter in New York from day one.

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measure on the June 1996 primary ballot so as to prevent it from being used as a November general-election issue against Democrats. Senator Feinstein's campaign chairman endorsed the initiative and began negotiating with its backers over the prominence of Feinstein's role in the eventual campaign. And on the national stage, President Clinton announced the formation of a commission to review affirmative action, a move widely seen as providing him with the necessary political cover to reverse his longstanding position and abandon the now-controversial policy. After 30 years of apparent inviolability, America's system of affirmative action appeared—like Communism—on the verge of collapsing without even a fight.

In California, as elsewhere, governmental affirmative-action programs were seen as being of little interest to nonblack minorities like Latinos or Asians, few of whom worked in the public sector. Indeed, as the attack on these programs began, some Latino leaders, expressing their anger at the scanty black support they had received during the Proposition 187 campaign, indicated that they might return the favor by sitting on their hands during the fight to come. As for Asians, they—even more than whites—had been denied opportunities by ethnic-preference programs; the explicitly restrictive quota on Chinese students at San Francisco's elite Lowell High School had been an Asian-American *cause célèbre* for several years. Thus, at first glance, the alignment of interest groups reinforced the polls in suggesting that no clear white-versus-nonwhite divide would be found on this issue.

Little wonder, then, that at this stage, Proposition 209 struck some observers as a potential counterweight to Proposition 187. Perhaps—the reasoning went—if the anti-immigrant elements behind Proposition 187 could be kept at a distance, it would be possible to win a strong mandate across all ethnic lines for the elimination of ethnic favoritism. Even where immigration was concerned, extensive private polling had indicated that the primary factor in white hostility was less the fact of immigration itself than balkanizing policies such as affirmative action, bilingual education, and multiculturalism, all of which were (rightly) seen as blocking traditional patterns of assimilation; remove the policies, and the hostility evaporated. And now, one of the most pernicious of those policies appeared about to fall before an amazingly broad ethnic coalition. Its demise could defuse white anger, allay nonwhite fears, and reaffirm the tradition of American pluralism.

But it was not to be. Governor Wilson, triumphant from his reelection sweep and now exploring a presidential race, decided to add opposition to affirmative action to his portfolio of national issues, where it would help balance his otherwise "liberal" positions on abortion, gun control, and gay rights. Although, as recently as December 1994, Wilson had reaffirmed his decades-long support for minority preferences, by February 1995 he was promising a national crusade to reestablish equality of opportunity under the law. With the encouragement of Ward Connerly, a black supporter whom he had appointed to the governing board of the University of California, Wilson began a lobbying campaign to persuade the university's regents to end ethnic preferences in admissions immediately.

Wilson's entrance into the battle provided a tactical boost, but it led to a strategic calamity. Because of 187, immigrants, Latinos in particular, viewed him as a demonic force, and 209, instead of being perceived as an antidote to 187, quickly became transformed in their eyes into its anointed successor. In addition, what had looked at first like a nonpartisan movement to abolish an unfair system was now taking on the appearance of a cog in a poll-driven presidential campaign, with Wilson's own about-face being seen as an exceptionally cynical move.

When the Wilson presidential bid collapsed, as it rapidly did, foes of the initiative took heart, the more so since its supporters were showing an obvious lack of unity, competence, or significant financial resources. Any hope of enlisting prominent Democrats in the campaign evaporated. The Republican party now stepped in, rescuing the campaign financially while assuming complete control, and installed Connerly as its public face. Despite the latter's efforts to prevent the measure from appearing narrowly partisan, the Proposition 209 effort soon became largely a get-out-the-vote adjunct to the 1996 campaigns of Bob Dole and other GOP candidates.

This proved disastrous. Blue-collar Reagan Democrats, among the strongest foes of racial preferences, abandoned the measure in droves. With extraordinary obtuseness, Republican television spots directly linked Proposition 209 with Proposition 187, leading to a precipitous drop in Latino and even Asian backing. For nearly two years, polls had shown Latino support matching that of whites; in the wake of the Republican media campaign, Latinos ultimately voted against the measure even more strongly than did blacks. Proposition 209 failed even to carry a majority of Asians, the group with the most to gain from ending quotas in university admissions.

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In the end, 209 did win, but by a mere eight-point margin, just a quarter of what earlier polls had predicted. Moreover, from a narrowly Republican perspective, the measure failed in its primary duty of pulling party candidates to victory. On the contrary, from Dole on down, the GOP suffered a series of crushing defeats throughout California. Chagrined Republicans now concluded that the whole idea of ending affirmative action had energized the opposing base of minority voters much more than the supporting base of white conservatives. Instead of blaming their own tactics, they instead began to backtrack on the issue itself as much and as far as was quietly possible, figuring that so racially-charged a topic was just too risky to exploit effectively. Since most Republicans had never been comfortable dealing with these matters in the first place, the decision came easily enough.

But the most unfortunate consequence of the final vote was precisely the impression it conveyed of ethnic polarization. California's whites had overwhelmingly voted one way, its nonwhites overwhelmingly the other. Many opponents of immigration now cited this fact as proof that the interests of minorities inevitably diverged from those of whites, with no common ground possible. To more extreme voices, the victory of numerous Latino candidates in the 1996 elections signaled that California had been lost to America, and that a Latino secessionist movement—foreshadowing the eventual splintering of the country at large—was already visible on the horizon.

V

INTO THIS heated landscape now entered the last of the three ballot measures, Proposition 227, aimed at dismantling bilingual education but propelled from an unexpected quarter.

During 1996, as political attention focused on the presidential contest and Proposition 209, a small group of Latino immigrant parents in downtown Los Angeles, frustrated that their children were not being taught English—in practice, "bilingual education" in California meant Spanish-only instruction—began a public boycott of their local elementary school. With the help of a media-savvy Episcopal priest and longtime immigrant-rights activist named Alice Callaghan, the boycott attracted considerable coverage, gaining the support of Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan and eventually forcing the school district to capitulate and move the students to English classes. The matter seemed closed, but it was not.

At this point, the story of Proposition 227 merges with my own, and thus requires a brief digression. My political activities in California had extended back a few years, beginning with a decision to challenge Pete Wilson for renomination in the Republican gubernatorial primary of 1994; running on a pro-immigrant and anti-affirmative-action platform, I won 34 percent of the vote. In that same year, I played a prominent role in the (unsuccessful) campaign to defeat Proposition 187 and, after that, in the (more successful) effort to block anti-immigration legislation in Congress. I had also hoped to involve myself heavily in Proposition 209, but was understandably rejected once Wilson's operatives gained influence in the effort.

As a strong believer in American assimilationism, I had long had an interest in bilingual education. Inspired in part by the example of my own mother, who was born in Los Angeles into a Yiddish-speaking immigrant home but had quickly and easily learned English as a young child, I had never understood why children were being kept for years—sometimes many years—in native-language classes, or why such programs had continued to exist and even expand after decades of obvious failure.

The miserable record of bilingual education was evident from official statistics: a full quarter of all children in California public schools were classified as not knowing English, and 95 percent of these children failed to learn English in any given year. In fact, schools were paid extra for each child who did not know or had not learned English—a clear incentive for retaining them in a native-language program against all logic and against their parents' wishes. The law authorizing this system had actually expired a decade earlier, but since the state government was deadlocked on the matter, bilingual education remained mandatory almost everywhere.

Ending this failed and legally dubious program, which was now even forcing some parents to picket their own children's schools, seemed the ideal target of a voter initiative, and I decided to make such an effort. In broad terms, my goal was to provide for the assimilationist approach to American ethnic diversity the same opportunity to demonstrate its appeal and popular support that Proposition 187 had provided, disastrously, for ethnic nationalists on all sides.

Nothing could be more obvious than that immigrants themselves assigned enormous importance to learning English and to ensuring that their children learned English. Yet because of bilingual education, the completely opposite impression had

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been created, namely, that immigrants were ardently demanding that America's public schools help maintain their family's native language and culture. If executed properly, I believed, a campaign to eliminate these programs could attract substantial, perhaps overwhelming, support from immigrants themselves, thereby helping to puncture the mistaken anxieties of California's white middle class.

But I also recognized that in many respects the political climate was extraordinarily inopportune for such an effort. The ethnic wounds inflicted by 187 had been reopened by the destructive handling of 209, and for a Republican like myself to jump in with a proposal to dismantle the bilingual cornerstone of Latino public education was to risk a terrible explosion. In order to mitigate the risk, it was absolutely crucial that the ballot measure be properly perceived as being both pro-immigrant and politically nonpartisan.

With regard to the former, my own pro-immigrant credentials provided some credibility, but not enough. So I began recruiting a cadre of key supporters: Alice Callaghan, with decades of unswerving left-wing activism on behalf of immigrants and their children; Gloria Matta Tuchman, a Latina and California's most prominent anti-bilingual activist; and Jaime Escalante, of *Stand and Deliver* fame, perhaps America's most renowned public-school teacher and himself a Latino immigrant long opposed to bilingual programs.

But no less crucial was to avoid the deadly embrace of California's numerous anti-immigrant activists, who were likely to jump immediately aboard such a campaign. Since their touchstone had become the elimination of public spending on immigrants, I drafted my own "English for the Children" measure to save no money but rather to appropriate an additional, if rather modest, $50 million a year for English-literacy programs aimed at adult immigrants. The maneuver succeeded, provoking the strong opposition of 187 activists to our entire initiative.

This left the various political establishments. For different reasons, both leading Latino and leading Republican figures maintained a stunned silence throughout most of the campaign. My meetings with the former were cordial; many Latino leaders seemed privately as skeptical of bilingual programs as I, but concerns about a revolt by their activist base prevented them from considering an endorsement, even after public polls consistently showed Latino support for the measure running in the 70- to 80-percent range. As for Republican leaders, they were terrified by the prospect of a minority-voter backlash of the sort their own ham-fisted campaign for 209 had provoked; despite nearly 90-percent Republican support in polls, they, too, mostly distanced themselves from the measure.

Teachers' unions were similarly conflicted. The late Albert Shanker, founder of the American Federation of Teachers, had for years been among the most vocal national critics of bilingual programs, but his successors had generally made their peace with the program. Most rank-and-file teachers, however, continued to view the system as a scandalous failure, and resented the extra pay and perks that went to bilingual instructors. In October 1997, over the strong opposition of union leadership, a grassroots referendum campaign in the gigantic Los Angeles local garnered 48 percent of the vote for a proposal making support for Proposition 227 official union policy.

All these splits, so surprising to journalists, were extremely helpful to our campaign. When Proposition 227 first appeared on the scene, it seemed almost certain to be perceived as "Son of Proposition 187"—another test of raw political power between California whites and Latinos. Instead, the story we emphasized was one that pitted the common sense of ordinary people—white and Latino, Democrat and Republican—against the timid political elites of all these groups, unwilling to challenge the special interests that benefited from a failed system. Our message to the media was populism without xenophobia, and it resonated widely. Every poll or news story highlighting the widespread Latino dislike of bilingual programs helped reassure moderate and liberal whites that our measure was not anti-minority, while simultaneously persuading conservatives that Latinos and other immigrants shared their own basic values and assimilationist goals.

But there was also a countercampaign, which in resources and funding could hardly have been more dissimilar to our own. Our statewide effort consisted of just three full-time workers, myself included, together with a handful of volunteers whose main role was to participate in public debates and respond to media inquiries. By contrast, "No on 227" was a traditional, well-funded operation led by ace Democratic political consultant Richie Ross and a veteran campaign staff, backed by a field operation of thousands of local activists. It counted the public support of President Clinton, the chairmen of both the state Republican and De-

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mocratic parties, all four candidates for governor, every educational organization, every public and private union, and nearly every newspaper. Our opposition was to spend millions on a coordinated barrage of radio, television, and print advertisements; our own campaign was forced to rely almost entirely upon stories in the free media.

Still, despite this monumental imbalance, our foes faced challenges of their own. From the start, public opinion had overwhelmingly and consistently favored "English for the Children" across all ethnic and ideological lines. Although "No on 227" boasted the support of a coalition of pro-bilingual partners, any direct defense of bilingual education was out of the question: nearly everyone knew that the existing system was a failure. No more feasible, given the pro-immigrant credentials of Proposition 227's main backers and strong immigrant support in the polls, was any attack on the measure as mean-spirited or 187-like. Indeed, such a tactic, by creating an ethnic divide over the measure, might actually backfire by solidifying white support for it.

THE ULTIMATE strategy chosen by the anti-Proposition 227 forces was breathtakingly cynical. This coalition of Latino activists, Democratic operatives, and educational organizations attempted, 187-style, to provoke a white taxpayer backlash by portraying the measure as a huge government "giveaway" to immigrants because of the extra money earmarked to assist adults in learning English. (The entire sum of $50 million amounted to an annual $1.50 per Californian.) Simultaneously, a completely different advertising message, aimed at California's Latino audience, claimed that the problems with bilingual programs had recently been fixed and that Proposition 227 would actually prevent children from learning English in school.

These nakedly dishonest tactics shredded the credibility of the anti-227 campaign, which received a further blow when its major financial backer was discovered to be A. Jerrold Perenchio, a Republican billionaire and close ally of Governor Wilson. Not himself Latino or Spanish-speaking, Perenchio derived his fortune from his ownership of Univision, the Spanish-language television network, and thus had an obvious economic motive in preventing Latino children from learning English in school. Not only did Univision blanket California with anti-227 "advertorials," broadcast free of charge, but the leading Democratic *and* Republican candidates for governor counted Perenchio as their largest financial donor, and all of them starred in Perenchio-funded anti-227 commercials.

When voting day finally arrived, Proposition 227 passed in a landslide, gaining 61 percent of the vote across ethnic and ideological lines. True, the "No" advertising campaign, which outspent our "Yes" campaign by about 25 to 1, took its toll, reducing by over a third the 62-percent Latino support the initiative had enjoyed before the start of the television barrage. But since advertising campaigns merely rent support rather than buy it, Latino backing for Proposition 227 in post-election polls soon returned to its earlier levels. More importantly, the actual dismantling of bilingual-education programs in the wake of 227 proceeded with minimal Latino opposition anywhere in California.

Under the measure, parents who wish to place or keep their children in a bilingual program can apply for a waiver, but few have done so. Within months of the vote, the number of students in bilingual education had fallen to about a tenth of its previous levels, and numerous follow-up stories in the press have featured glowing accounts of parents thrilled that schools are finally teaching their children to read, write, and speak English. There have been almost no signs of the immigrant unhappiness or resistance to English-language classrooms that had been confidently predicted by ethnic activists and anti-immigrant ideologues alike. Proposition 227 had tested the case for a return to assimilationist policies in public education and had proved it both popular and workable.

VI

THREE RACIALLY-CHARGED issues, with three different contours and consequences. What is their meaning for our national future?

Since before the Declaration of Independence, the "American Dilemma"—to borrow the title of Gunnar Myrdal's classic 1944 work—has indeed been that of race, and it has cast a huge shadow over our entire political life. But that dilemma has had clearly circumscribed limits: namely, the long-standing coexistence and conflict between a (usually poor) small African-American minority and a (usually less poor) large European-American majority. This framework was constant throughout our history, from Jamestown through the Civil War to the civil-rights era of the 1960's, and even today it completely dominated the thoughts of those who led President Clinton's National Commission on Race.

Until recently, those aspects of the American experience that did not fully conform to this bipolar, black-white paradigm were either squeezed into

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place or overlooked with little effect. Thus, tens of millions of penniless European immigrants around the turn of the century were initially viewed as "aliens of a foreign race" but, through the ideology and the reality of the American melting pot, were transformed into "whites" within a generation or two. Relatively small populations of "others"—Asians in California, American Indians throughout the country—were either assimilated into mainstream society or generally ignored as distinct American racial groups. And, as we have seen, Hispanics were not even classified separately from other Caucasians prior to the 1970 census.

In many respects, the civil-rights/Great Society era of the 1960's represented the culmination of this vision of America. A shamed but wholly dominant white society created a cornucopia of social-welfare and social-engineering programs (Head-start, busing, affirmative action), largely aimed at blacks and intended to serve as partial atonement for the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow while easing black entrance into the American dream. But the ideology that evolved to justify these programs also radically changed the terms of the American social compact, replacing the emphasis on assimilation with an emphasis on ethnic difference.

Two further events occurred simultaneously with the completion of the old American racial agenda, and they drastically magnified the impact of this ideological change: the passage of the 1965 Immigration Reform Act, which reopened America to large-scale immigration after a 40-year hiatus, and, as a direct consequence of affirmative-action politics, the creation of the Hispanic racial category.

Over the past 30 years and at a growing pace, more than 25 million new immigrants—80 percent of non-European origin—have entered America, and they and their descendants now constitute a rapidly growing fraction of our total population. Well over half of these new immigrants have been Hispanic, and this ethnic group—today defined in racial terms, with all the attendant special treatment under official government policies—will by itself represent between 20 and 25 percent of America by the middle of the approaching century, at which point Americans of European origin will have become a minority of the population.

A future America in which both whites and all other ethnic groups see themselves as minorities will be far different from our traditional majority-white/minority-black society. Since the 1960's, the deepening ideological decay of the American melting pot, especially among the journalists and intellectuals who shape our thoughts, has transformed our official self-image from that of a nation of individuals living in a common culture into that of a nation of groups arrayed against one another in an ethnic spoils system. Multiculturalism and "diversity" thoroughly dominate our nation's schools and politics and public discourse, encouraging minorities to exercise influence through the mobilization of ethnic or racial grievance. Under this framework, the rise of a similar ethnic-grievance movement among America's emerging white minority is likely, perhaps inevitable.

Already there are early warning signs of such a movement. Public schools are reporting interest in white student clubs, and white firefighters associations and European-American pressure groups are forming in California. Although so far these developments and others like them are minuscule, and the individuals involved make every effort to avoid even a hint of extremism, evolving white-bloc politics could eventually develop a white-nationalist orientation or fringe. Elements of white nationalism have been the unspoken subtext behind the rise of extremist militia groups and the appearance of populist third parties, and represented the obvious core of the anti-immigration movement of the mid-90's.

As the first major state to face the political reality of a shrinking white minority, California has become the laboratory of America's ethnic future. The verdict of its recent experiments is a mixed one. From the distance of five years, the raw emotions evoked by Proposition 187 may seem as if from another world. Not only has the initiative itself died a lingering death in federal court, but the subsequent, far more moderate 1995 federal legislation that it inspired, removing various social-welfare benefits from legal and illegal immigrants, has also largely been repealed. And where Democrats like Dianne Feinstein once worked hard to outdo Pete Wilson in anti-immigrant fervor, now Republicans like George W. Bush work no less hard to showcase their facility with the Spanish language.

In part, this change is surely traceable to our transformed economic and political landscape. During 1994, America was facing difficult economic times, and California in particular was struggling through its deepest recession of the century; today we are in the midst of a seemingly endless boom, led by California's high-tech economy. In addition, political movements targeting immigrants have had the unintended consequence of generating an unprecedented wave of naturalization and voter registration among Latinos and Asians,

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with these groups doubling their share of the California vote between 1990 and 1998. Politically vulnerable communities are no longer so politically vulnerable.

But surface appearances are deceiving. Underlying social dynamics, whether in California or in the nation at large, have not changed, and ethnic conflict, temporarily submerged, has far from disappeared. To the contrary, given the nature of the demographic processes now at work in the country, the potential for such conflict is growing rather than diminishing, and any sudden crack in our unprecedented economic prosperity might well be the occasion for its revival.

This need not occur. The overwhelming evidence is that today's immigrants are at least as economically productive and socially assimilative as their European predecessors, with low rates of crime, welfare dependency, and social instability. Asians have followed the pattern of high academic achievement and economic entrepreneurship exhibited by America's Jews before them, while Latin American immigrants have demonstrated much the same social conservatism and working-class values as Italians or Slavs. (One remarkable sign of their assimilationism is the high rate of conversion to evangelical Protestantism among Latin American immigrants.) As the campaign for Proposition 227 proved, today's immigrants are no less eager than yesterday's to have their children merge into our English-language society. Most significantly, nearly 40 percent of third-generation Asians and Latinos are intermarrying, usually with whites, a figure far greater than the intermarriage rates of Italian-Americans or Greek-Americans with other ethnic groups as late as the 1950's.

It is therefore a tragedy of the first order that, even as the reality of the American melting pot remains as powerful as ever, the ideology behind it has almost disappeared, having been replaced by the "diversity" model and by the politics of grievance. A social ideology that allots to blacks and Latinos and Asians their own separatist institutions and suggested shares of society's benefits cannot long be prevented from extending itself to whites as well, especially as whites become merely one minority among many minorities. Before it is altogether too late, those who support this status quo must realize that the diversity prescription contains the seeds of national dissolution.

America today stands as one of the very few examples in history of a large and successful multiethnic society. If we are to continue and extend our success—which is hardly foreordained—we can only do so by returning to the core principles of Propositions 209 and 227: ethnic assimilation, and individual equality under the law. Otherwise, we face the very real threat of future movements along the lines of Proposition 187, each worse than the last, and on a national scale. There are few forces that could so easily break America as the coming of white nationalism.

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Was Zionism Unjust?

Hillel Halkin

THE CASE of "The New Historians vs. The State of Israel" can, it would appear, be considered closed. Not that a jury of scholars has returned with a verdict. The plaintiffs have simply dropped the main charges.

Such, at any rate, is the rather surprising impression one gets from three bulky new books: Benny Morris's *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999**; Avi Shlaim's *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*†; and, in Hebrew, Tom Segev's *The Days of the Poppies: Palestine Under the British*.

Morris, Shlaim, and Segev have all figured prominently in a school of Left-leaning, post-Zionist Israeli historians that has over the last two decades, at times with the help of newly opened Israeli archives, published an extensive literature of "revisionist" books, articles, and monographs challenging the conventional "Zionist narrative" of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Israel, these "new historians" have argued, far from being the valiant creation of a deserving people, was "besmirched by original sin" (the phrase is Morris's). Or, more precisely, by a concatenation of sins, its establishment made possible by the dispossession of a Palestinian people deliberately driven into exile; its so-called defensive wars having been premeditated acts of aggression committed by militarily superior forces; its unyielding policies toward the Arab world meant to forestall a peace that would prevent the Jewish state from expanding territorially and from imposing a siege mentality on its own citizens. In the bitter argument over right and wrong in the Middle East, the Jews, so it seemed, were less right than the Arabs, the Arabs more wronged than the Jews.

Although originating in academia, the debate over the "new history" has been taken up extensively by the media in Israel and abroad. Supporters have praised its objectivity, freed from the restraints of Zionist myth and nationalist clichés. Critics have accused it of systematically falsifying the past with the not-so-hidden agenda of delegitimizing Israel itself. Yet until now, while yielding numerous studies of specific issues and episodes, the "new history" has produced no comprehensive survey of its subject, which has made it difficult to summarize its conclusions. Morris, Shlaim, and Segev's new books lay these before us.

And what do we find? That the devil, as the Hebrew expression goes, is not so fearsome. All three books, certainly, present a version of history that is far from the accepted Zionist one. All three contend that Zionism inflicted great harm on an Arab

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* Knopf, 720 pp., $40.00.

† Norton, 448 pp., $29.95.

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world that had little choice but to react to it as it did. All accuse Zionist and Israeli leaders of obduracy and insensitivity toward the Arabs. All blame them for missing numerous opportunities for greater Jewish-Arab dialogue and understanding. All hold them at least partly responsible for every outbreak of hostilities between Jews and Arabs in this century. And all concede, whether openly or between the lines, that, short of abandoning the very attempt to create and maintain a Jewish state in Palestine, more conciliatory leaders with more conciliatory policies would not have made any difference.

AVI SHLAIM is the harshest of the three in his judgments of Israel. His new book, a history of Arab-Israeli relations from the establishment of Israel to the present, follows an earlier study, *Collusion Across the Jordan* (1988). There, Shlaim contended that in Israel's 1948-49 War of Independence, the military confrontation between Israel's Haganah and Transjordan's Arab Legion was largely a ruse, its stationary front the result of a secret pact between Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and Transjordan's British-backed King Abdullah to go through the motions of fighting while carving up Palestine behind the backs of the Palestinian Arabs.

Given the bitter battles fought along that front, Shlaim's was never an easy thesis to defend, and he has largely retreated from it in *The Iron Wall*. True, he still believes that Abdullah's "objective in sending his army into Palestine was not to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state but to make himself the master of the Arab part of Palestine." But since the "Arab part of Palestine" as defined by the 1947 UN partition resolution included salients that the Arab Legion fought hard for and lost, and others that it had to fight hard to retain, this hardly suggests "collusion."

In general, Shlaim's anti-Israel rhetoric clashes with his historian's respect for the facts. In one breath he can sneer at the "conventional Zionist version [that] portrays the 1948 war as a simple, bipolar, no-holds-barred struggle between a monolithic Arab adversary and a tiny Israel," and in the next admit:

> The desperate plight and heroism of the Jewish fighters are not in question. . . . It is true that the military experts of the Arab League had worked out a unified plan for the invasion. . . . The inability of the Arabs to coordinate their diplomatic and military plans was in no small measure responsible for the disaster that overwhelmed them.

In plain English, the "Zionist narrative" had it right: the Arabs set out to destroy the new Jewish state in 1948 and might well have succeeded had it not been for their own incompetence and Jewish valor.

Ben-Gurion, though treated with respect as a cunning statesman, is *The Iron Wall*'s main villain. Portrayed as an intransigent hard-liner who sought to whip up tensions with the Arabs, he is repeatedly contrasted with the more moderate and "flexible" Moshe Sharett, his foreign minister and temporary replacement in 1954-55. And yet, when it comes to Ben-Gurion's strategic vision, Shlaim can write: "On the broad terms of a settlement with the Arabs, there was no real difference between Sharett and Ben-Gurion. Both men believed that a settlement should be based on the status quo." In other words, the would-be territorial expansionists in these years were not the Israelis but the Arabs, who insisted (with varying degrees of Western support) that Israel give up territory as a precondition for peace talks.

Indeed, Shlaim, who acknowledges that Ben-Gurion's peace feelers toward Egypt in the early 50's were consistently turned down by Nasser until Israel joined Britain and France in the 1956 Sinai campaign, is able to point to a grand total of two cases between 1948 and the 1978 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty in which, so he claims, Israel torpedoed a chance for peace. The first involved the corrupt and perhaps mentally unbalanced Syrian strongman Colonel Husni Zaim, who seized power in Damascus in early 1949 and secretly suggested to Ben-Gurion a settlement based on Israel's ceding to Syria half the Sea of Galilee—a large lake, entirely Israel's by the partition plan and on its side of the international border, that was (and still is) the country's main source of water.

Ben-Gurion rejected the offer; Zaim was overthrown four months later by a coup; and Shlaim, though believing that "if an opportunity for a breakthrough had been missed, the responsibility must be attributed . . . to Israel," never contends that negotiations with Zaim would have succeeded or that an agreement with him would have been respected by his more belligerent successors. Incidentally, he also fails to explain by what logic someone of his views, according to which contemporary Israel's claims to even an inch of the former Syrian Golan Heights are inadmissible, should view as reasonable a Syrian demand for half the Sea of Galilee.

The second case was in 1971, four years after

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both the Six-Day war (which Shlaim concedes Israel neither sought nor planned for) and the famous "three no's"—to peace with, negotiations with, or recognition of Israel—issued by Arab leaders gathered in Khartoum. In that year, Nasser's successor Anwar Sadat proposed a nonbelligerency pact in return for an Israeli withdrawal into Sinai from the banks of the Suez Canal. Both Shlaim and Benny Morris consider Prime Minister Golda Meir's refusal to take this idea seriously a fateful mistake that led to the Yom Kippur war. Most likely they are right; but since they confess to having been anticipated in this opinion by close associates of Meir like her generally hawkish defense minister Moshe Dayan and her ambassador to Washington Yitzhak Rabin, the incident as described by them testifies to nothing more sinister than her overconfidence and bad judgment. Meir, they concede, would have been happy to sit down to full peace talks with any Arab leader ready to join her.

LIKE SHLAIM, Benny Morris, whose earlier major study was *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (1987), also tends to make sweeping criticisms of Israel that are then qualified to the point of unspoken retraction. Thus, he can both write that, between 1948 and 1956 (after which, he admits, such a gesture would have been useless), "Israel's leaders simply refused to contemplate a [single] concession of territory or water to achieve peace . . . they were remarkably single-minded and rigid" and confess at the same time: "It is unclear whether, had Israel been more forthcoming, the Arab leaders would have followed through." Like Shlaim, that is, he identifies as the main feature of Israel's "rigidity" between 1948 and 1967 the fact that, a small vulnerable country surrounded by far larger enemies, it did not agree in advance to surrender precious land.

Furthermore, while Morris's *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (on the whole a well-documented and fair-minded book) has often been cited against Israel as evidence that it deliberately stampeded the Palestinians into flight in 1948, in some cases by the commission of atrocities, Morris's conclusions in *Righteous Victims* are quite cautious. The worst of these atrocities, the Irgun's massacre of Arab villagers in Deir Yassin, he writes in partial acceptance of the Irgun version, was not premeditated, and resulted in far fewer dead than the commonly accepted figure; and although

> Ben-Gurion clearly wanted as few Arabs as possible to remain in the Jewish state, there was no systematic expulsion policy. . . . The principal cause of the mass flight of April-June [1948, the period in which most of the refugees left] was Jewish military attack, or fears of such attack. . . . In some areas Arab commanders ordered the villagers to evacuate to clear the ground for military purposes or to prevent surrender. . . . Flight proved to be contagious. The fall of, and flight from, the big cities—principally Haifa and Jaffa—radiated pessimism and despair to surrounding villages. In the countryside flight by one clan led to that of neighboring clans, and flight from one village to flight from neighboring villages. . . . The exodus was, overall, the result of a cumulative process and a set of causes.

In short, most of the Arab refugees fled because there was a war going on around them, not because they were ethnically cleansed.

And the 1948 war itself? "An inevitability," says Tom Segev, whose *The Days of the Poppies* concludes with it:

> Everyone [on both the Arab and Jewish side] realized that the UN partition plan could not possibly be carried out. The boundary between the [proposed Arab and Jewish] states was long, tortuous, and indefensible; the Jewish state was supposed to include half a million Arabs, slightly more than the number of its Jews. . . . Nor was there any reason to believe that the internationalization of Jerusalem could work. No one believed in the UN map. Everyone knew there would be a war.

In fact, writes Segev, whose previous book, *The Seventh Million* (1993), accused Zionist leaders in Palestine of indifference to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, the 1948 war had become inevitable long before this:

> Once the Zionist enterprise got under way in Palestine with the aim of establishing an independent state with a Jewish majority, war was unavoidable. Everything pointed to the likelihood of its being a long, drawn-out war, with no clear end.

Neither Shlaim nor Morris disputes this. The very title of Shlaim's book reinforces Segev's point, being taken from an essay by the conservative Zionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who wrote in 1923:

> A voluntary agreement [with the Arabs] is unthinkable. Consequently, those who look upon such an agreement as the *sine qua non* of Zionism, may well say *non* now and bid farewell to

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> Zionism. Zionist colonization must either be abandoned or continued against the will of the native population. It can only be furthered and developed [by] an Iron Wall that cannot be broken by them.

To which Shlaim adds:

> Labor Zionists were reluctant to admit that military force would be necessary if the Zionist movement was to achieve its objectives. Jabotinsky faced up to this fact fairly and squarely.

The bottom line? Three foremost "new historians" agree that the only way to have avoided nearly a century of conflict with the Arabs over Palestine was for Jews never to have gone there with national aims in the first place. The only original sin Israel was conceived in was the sin of the Zionist dream itself.

NOT THAT Morris, Shlaim, and Segev's list of Zionism and Israel's wrongdoings is a short one. It includes such varied charges as that Zionist land purchases under the British Mandate led to the eviction and pauperization of Arab peasants; that even in the Mandate period, Zionist leaders believed that Palestine's Arab population would have to be "transferred" to other countries; that Israel forcibly expelled some Palestinians from towns and villages in 1948; that ruthless Israeli military measures in the early 50's against Arab "infiltrators," most of them refugees seeking to return to or salvage lost property, killed and wounded large numbers of unarmed people; that in these same years high Israeli politicians and army officers pushed unsuccessfully for a second round of fighting to redraw Israel's borders; that the Israeli army murdered Egyptian prisoners of war in both 1956 and 1967; and so forth.

These charges are largely true and largely unflattering, though some are mitigated by the research of the "new historians" themselves. (Thus, Morris puts the total number of Arabs forced from their land by Jewish agricultural settlement in the Mandate period at "several thousand families"—hardly a massive phenomenon.) Most have always been public knowledge, if often knowledge lurking in shadows that Israel's "old historians" shied from investigating. Some raise hard questions.

Was there, for example, any moral justification for expelling Palestinians in 1948? It can be argued that if Israel had not drastically reduced its Arab population at the time, it would have confronted an unmanageable Arab minority even in the first years of its existence. It can also be observed that Israel's leaders could not have imagined that the expellees, rather than being decently resettled by their host countries like tens of millions of other refugees in this century, would be made to rot permanently in ramshackle camps. It is difficult, though, to feel comfortable with such arguments.

Still, not only do the facts need to be faced, there is everything to be said for Israel's facing them. A society that knows its past is better prepared for the future. It is likely, for example, that the behavior of the Israeli army during the *intifada*, in the early stages of which in particular it behaved with unnecessary brutality, might have been more restrained if not for the myth known in Hebrew as *tohar ha-neshek*, "the purity of arms"—that is, the notion, taught to several generations of Israelis, that their soldiers never did and never could use their weapons unworthily. An Israel more aware that a Jewish soldier was as capable of excess as a non-Jewish one might have sent off its young men to face provocative Palestinian demonstrators and stone throwers with less confidence in their instincts and stricter guidance and supervision.

An Israel that put less credence in a legendary purity would also have found its belief in itself less shaken by the *intifada*. Faced with TV shots of soldiers run amok, many Israelis assumed that something had gone terribly wrong with a society that never would have allowed such things in the past; in reality, what was wrong was a situation that this society had no idea how to handle. This is the *other* danger of myths: not only the irrational actions they sometimes induce but the irrational reactions produced by them when punctured. A "Zionist narrative" in which the Jews are always in the right will inevitably spawn a counternarrative that the disillusioned will swallow whole.

THIS WAS one reason that Jabotinsky, whose honesty Shlaim so admires, was exasperated by the Labor Zionist contention, repeated at every opportunity in the early years of the Mandate, that Palestine's Arab masses had no reason to oppose Jewish settlement, which could only bring them untold benefits, and that their anti-Zionism was a misunderstanding fomented by the Arab upper classes and by a British policy of divide-and-rule. To be taken in by such a fairy tale, Jabotinsky believed, was not only to let down one's guard against the anti-Jewish reaction that was bound to come, it was to set oneself up for a mental and emotional plunge. In the short run, the realization that Palestine's Arabs had every reason to resist Jewish settle-

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ment might engender a feeling of despair; yet "this despair," Jabotinsky told his audience,

> will in the end bear fruit; for the illusion in which you placed your trust is dead. . . . A nation that is likened to an old woman, a feeble-minded nation, bows its head and says: "If I lose the illusion, I have lost my country." But a nation of builders . . . lifts up its head and says: "The illusion is dead, long live the truth."

Jabotinsky may have had a higher opinion of both the world's and the Jews' capacity for truth than was merited. Without the illusion that a Jewish majority in Palestine could be established peacefully, many Zionists would have refused to settle there; without it, there would have been no Balfour Declaration, and no international support for Zionism. In this sense, the real *naïf* was Jabotinsky himself. Nor did he sufficiently take into account a Jewish moral perspective that, shaped by the biblical prophets and an age-old habit of self-blame, tended to interpret the existence of violent enemies as a sign of Jewish failure.

And yet Jabotinsky was right about one thing: without a deep-seated belief in the intrinsic justice—what he himself called the "sacred truth"—of the demand for a Jewish home in the land of Israel, the case for Zionism collapses. Let this case become a matter of bookkeeping—so much Jewish suffering versus so much Arab suffering, so much Jewish blame versus so much Arab blame—and the Jews automatically lose, since nothing done to them by Palestine's Arabs can remotely justify the latter's dispossession. Although human history may be one long chronicle of tribal and national land grabs, there is nothing particularly admirable about any of them, and as Ruth Wisse trenchantly observes in her book *If I Am Not for Myself. . . . The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews* (1993), to offer "the admirability of Jewish achievement as evidence of Jewish national legitimacy is a fatal mixture, since it appears to make the legitimacy contingent on the admirability."

Conversely, accept the intrinsic justice of Zionism and it is possible to investigate the most unsavory chapters from Israel's past without Jewish national legitimacy being challenged in the least. Even the "new historians," as I have said, turn out then, however inadvertently, to be on Israel's side.

BUT HOW, in the intellectual war being waged between Zionism and post-Zionism in Israel today, are Israelis to be convinced of this justice? Certainly not by reading the "new historians" themselves. When it comes to Zionism's origins and ambitions, Shlaim and Morris are studiously neutral; Segev, whose style is anecdotal, simply begins *in medias res* with the British entry into Palestine.

Nor is convincing Israelis of the justice of Zionism the proper duty of the historian. It is the duty of the Israeli educator and educational system.

This system, it so happens, has been much in the news lately. As opposed to the usual order of things, the news did not first break in Israel and spread to the international media, but rather started with a front-page article in the August 14 *New York Times*, headlined "Israel's History Textbooks Replace Myths With Facts," by the paper's Jerusalem correspondent Ethan Bronner.

"The start of this school year," Bronner wrote, describing the trickle-down effect of the "new history" on Israeli pedagogy, "marks a quiet revolution in the teaching of Israeli history to most Israeli pupils. New, officially approved textbooks make plain that many of the most common Israeli beliefs are as much myth as fact."

As instances of this trend, Bronner pointed to several new texts introduced this year into the ninth-grade curriculum, in which students study 20th-century world and Jewish history. "Schoolchildren," he wrote,

> have long been taught that the Jews have always been surrounded by enemies and that their victory over five Arab states in the 1948 War of Independence was a near miracle of David-and-Goliath proportions. . . . [But] the new books say that it was the Israelis who had the military edge in the War of Independence [and] that many Palestinians left their land because they were afraid, and in some cases expelled by Israeli soldiers. The books freely use the word "Palestinian" to refer to a people and a nationalist movement, unheard of in the previous texts. They refer to the Arabic name for the 1948 war—the *nakbah*, or catastrophe—and they ask the pupils to put themselves in the Arabs' shoes and consider how they would have felt about Zionism. Finally, the books no longer separate Jewish and Israeli history from events around the world but weave them into a single tapestry. . . . "Only ten years ago much of this was taboo," reflected Eyal Naveh, a history professor at Tel Aviv University and the author of one of the new ninth-grade textbooks. "We were not mature enough to look at these controversial problems. Now we can deal with this the way

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> Americans deal with the Indians and black enslavement. We are getting rid of certain myths."

On the face of it, Bronner's revelations—fed to him, it would seem, by a source in Israel's ministry of education—seem less than world-shaking. They may reflect changes in emphasis, but the only "miracle" claimed by the old "Zionist narrative" for 1948 was that a Jewish "military edge" was achieved, not that victory was won without such an edge; and the word "Palestinian," along with the knowledge that its bearers have their own political leadership and point of view, is not exactly a novelty in Israeli life. If students are now told that these Palestinians left their land because they were afraid and "in some cases" expelled—well, war is something to be afraid of, and "in some cases" does not mean in most cases.

A FIRST glance at the textbooks themselves confirms this impression. Here (in my translation) is Naveh's *The Twentieth Century* on the events of 1948:

> Immediately after the partition resolution, the "state in progress" had to fight for its life. The British . . . could not (or did not want to) prevent Arab attacks. . . . In the bloody war between Palestine's Arabs and its Jewish community, the Arabs enjoyed a demographic and topographic advantage. . . . The turning point proved to be the organizational and technological superiority of the Jewish community, which functioned as a full-fledged state. The Arab inhabitants of the country began a mass flight and were already, for all practical purposes, defeated. . . . The War of Independence expanded Israel's borders beyond those of the partition resolution and, recognized by the international community, they stayed in place until 1967.

All this seems harmless enough. Indeed, for all Naveh's brave talk to Ethan Bronner, his book does not refer even once to a partial Israeli responsibility for the refugee problem. For that, one has to go to the ministry of education itself, or rather to its "Pedagogic Authority," whose new textbook, *A World of Change*, has this to say:

> In the course of [the April-May offensive] masses of Palestinians left their homes. The reasons for this were varied and differed from place to place. In some cases it was the desire to get away from the fighting and the panic that set in upon hearing reports of Arab defeats and rumors of impending Jewish massacres. There were also some places where the Jewish fighting forces carried out expulsions. Families rapidly packed their belongings and were made to leave.

A bit harder on the Jews perhaps, but not outrageous. If this is the most the "new history" has done to the classroom, even Zionists, it would seem, can accept it.

On second glance, though, there *is* something that strikes one about these books. It is their tone—cool, detached, "objective," the same tone in which the student is asked to read about the rise of fascist Italy, the beginnings of the cold war, or the fall of the Soviet empire. The new books are not for or against anyone. They state, accurately enough, the bare facts. The Jews did this. The Arabs did that. Such was the outcome.

No doubt this is partly a consequence of the decision, programmatic in itself, to "weave" Jewish and world history together. A textbook needs unity, and one cannot perhaps expect it to crank up its emotional register every time it gets to the Jews after dealing in a neutral voice with other peoples. Still, the results give one pause.

Here is a classroom of thirteen- and fourteen-year-old Israeli boys and girls, studying (and very likely hearing) for the first time the story of their country's beginnings—and what they hear and study tells them nothing of what the declaration of a Jewish state in 1948 meant to Jews in Israel and all over the world: nothing of the excitement, the tremendous emotion, the joy and the tears; nothing of the dizzying sense of a dream unbelievably come true; nothing of the fear that this dream might soon perish in yet another annihilation of Jews; nothing of its roots in history, of *all* Jewish history suddenly focused by the moment as though by a burning glass; nothing of the thoughts and feelings of the young men and women who went into battle bearing this history on their backs; nothing at all. It could have happened in China or on the moon.

There are many words missing here, the smallest of which is "we." Nowhere is the ninth-grader reminded that he belongs to the people he is reading about, that he is flesh of their flesh and blood of their blood; nowhere that their story is his. He might have dropped from the moon himself. . . . But no, this is not entirely true. In a chapter on the Holocaust—one, interestingly, far longer than his chapter on the birth of Israel—Naveh writes: "As Jews, of course, we have a special relationship to

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the Holocaust." Apparently, a similar relationship does not exist with the state of Israel.*

Nor, needless to say, is there anything in these pages about the justice of Zionism, although Naveh does take space to inform the student that this was a movement that represented "a minority of the Jewish people."

WHAT CAN one say of such textbooks? That they do not attempt to create in the young Israeli the slightest identification with his people or his country? That they make no connection between this country and 3,000 years of Jewish history? That they do not explain in any meaningful way why it had to be taken from its former owners or why the Arab claim to it is not better than the Jewish one? All of the above are true.

This is the real damage inflicted on the new textbooks by the "new history" and the cultural trends it represents: not the demythicization of Israel's past but its narrative objectification, to the point that Israelis become viewers situated outside it. Objectification is not the same as objectivity, a frame of mind that (as the "new historians" with their postmodernist leanings can affirm) is at best relative. Rather, it is a process of numbing and emotional divorce.

This is damnable, first of all in regard to the ninth-graders themselves. Many of them have older brothers who are fighting in Lebanon; nearly all of them will soon be serving in the army themselves; nor is there any guarantee that they will not have to fight one day, too. To educate them in such a manner, deprived of the faintest notion of what it is all ultimately about, is to let them down cruelly.

Beyond this, of course, it is to let down an entire society. It is to adopt the post-Zionist thesis that Israel should be a "normal" country that can live in and for the present entirely as (to use a favorite post-Zionist buzz-phrase) "a state of all its citizens"—that is, a state in which Jews and Arabs are equal not only politically but in their mutually nullifying interpretations of history. But are there such normal countries? Do history texts in American schools treat the Declaration of Independence, the American Revolution, the Civil War, as if they and the ideas they represented had nothing to say to the American student?

The "Zionist narrative" has indeed been built partly on myths. Yet the idea that it cannot withstand the deconstruction of these myths is itself a myth of the "new history"—and one that Shlaim, Morris, and Segev's books unintentionally expose. For if Zionism was intrinsically just, this was because its analysis of the Jewish situation, which held that without an independent homeland in Palestine the Jewish people had no life in our times, was correct and has nothing to fear from the historical truth, whether this comes from the "new historians" or the old.

What needs to be feared is a Jewish people that forgets who it is. The Palestine conflict was inevitable, Tom Segev writes in *The Days of the Poppies*, because Palestine was too small to be divided equitably between the Jews and the Arabs. Fifty years later it has not grown any larger, while its Jewish population has increased over eightfold and its Arab population—*after* the flight of much of it—by two-and-a-half. Even on the assumption that the peace process succeeds, it will at best mean the containment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at a generally low level of violence, not its disappearance. On the contrary: this conflict will be fueled by intense rivalry and continual new Palestinian demands.

An Israel that is intellectually and emotionally unprepared will not cope well with these demands. That, however, is a prospect unlikely to worry the "new historians."

* Or with the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, a chapter of the Holocaust that has always been given great emphasis in Israel and Israeli schools as illustrating the other side of Hitler's war against the Jews—i.e., the Jews' readiness, when given even the slimmest chance, to fight back heroically against impossible odds. *The Twentieth Century* reduces the Warsaw uprising to a dry sentence.

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Confessions of an Ex-Elitist

David Schoenbrod

RECENT TIMES have been hard on those of us who dreamed of trusting farsighted and benevolent leaders dedicated to high-minded ideals. Not only is Communism dead, but Americans have learned more than they ever wanted to know about the foibles of their own high officials. This loss of trust has special meaning for me. I was reared not only to trust our idealistic leaders but to aspire to join their ranks. Early success and experience have disabused me.

I drank in idealism—of the social-democratic sort—from tales my father told me. When I was three he had just returned from World War II; bedtime after bedtime, for time out of mind, he sat and spun a story. In it, my parents and I were marooned on a tropical island shaped like a heart. In this benign wilderness, we made a comfortable home we called Friendly Heart Island. Friends and family from real life washed ashore for joyous reunions. For me, the story represented an adventure made safe, with me as the hero. But for my father, it was a script, written by him, for the world as one big happy family. That was the ultimate ideal.

When I was a few years older, my father told me a darker story—of how he and my grandfather had been cheated out of their rightful place in the world. As a student and young socialist in Chicago at the dawn of the 20th century, Grandfather Schoenbrod had worked his way through law school by making cigars with a small group of other students and young socialists: one would read aloud from a textbook while the others listened and rolled tobacco. Their hope was that, sooner rather than later, people would see how the individual pursuit of private advantage led to inhumane results. They would then cede power to enlightened men, who would run the world as good parents run a home, lovingly but with complete authority. Why complete authority? Because, if responsibility resided in officials checked by voters, selfishness and shortsightedness would inevitably return.

After receiving his law degree, Grandfather Schoenbrod ran for judge on the socialist-party ticket and of course lost. In his practice, he shared an office with Clarence Darrow for a while, but his specialty was real-estate law and, like many leftist lawyers, he made a lot of money. These good times came to a sudden end when a friend and partner forged his signature on a contract, producing a ruinous loss. Only after grandfather ratified the signature—the "brother" begged to be saved from jail because his wife was with child—and gave away his fortune to cover the loss did he discover that the pregnancy was a lie. His money was gone, the Great Depression set in, and his law practice dried up.

My father, then in his teens, was the one hurt

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most of all. There were no funds to help him with college. Although he tried to work his way through, a leg injury that calcified into a crippling condition kept him bedridden for a year and forced him to drop out. When he could walk again, he found himself on the New Deal's payroll of last resort, the Works Progress Administration, cleaning bricks one by one with a hammer. As the economy picked up at the end of the 1930's, he got a real job, married, and fathered a child, me, in 1942.

Come the war, my father, whose job exempted him from the draft, enlisted anyway: he wanted not only to fight fascism but to surmount his lack of a college education by becoming an officer. But his hopes came to naught. Trained to run a locomotive, Private Schoenbrod pulled a hospital train from the Normandy invasion in 1944 to the liberation of Buchenwald in 1945.

Wounded in spirit, and in the flesh by a German bomb, he returned bearing neither high rank nor evidence of a just world, bitter at the riches accumulated in the meantime by those who had stayed home. His new dream was to return to Paris to become a writer. Instead, to save enough cash for my college education, he remained in Chicago to compose advertising copy. That way, I would have the opportunities that fate and the selfishness of others had denied him.

Perhaps that was not the whole story, but it was the story I heard. My father's dreams for me are captured in a poem he wrote in France toward the end of the war. Entitled "A Message to Our Son on His Third Birthday," it begins:

> Out of the past, from our bones, from our blood,
> From our love, you emerged,
> Our challenge against time,
> Our glove flung into the face of death.
>
> You and your children shall fulfill our
> destiny,
> You and your children shall live our
> dreams.
> In you we shall always exist and never die.

THE DESTINY and the dreams to which my father alluded were not of the material sort. The poem asks, "What do we bequeath you as your heritage over and beyond the cash and the concrete?" The answer includes a keen appreciation of the pleasures of life but also "our sense of justice and compassion,/And the hatred of intolerance and greed."

In our family story, as in the covenant between Abraham and the Lord in Genesis, the younger generation was granted not a choice but a privilege, and one that implied a debt. In my case, the debt was to be redeemed by taking on and passing along the family ideals. That included showing what one of the Schoenbrods, given a fair chance, could do. I would set the record straight by becoming a member of that idealistic elite whose mission was to pursue justice and compassion and to undo intolerance and greed.

I followed my father's script without knowing it existed, let alone recognizing how it changed as his socialism mellowed into Adlai Stevenson-type liberalism. I had made it to Yale College in the early 1960's when John F. Kennedy entered the White House. Heeding the call of that knight in tailored armor, I set out to position myself for public service. I got a succession of summer jobs with Senator and then Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, and then, thinking that a fellowship to Oxford would be a useful credential, I shaped my college activities to be selected.

After Oxford, I was at Yale Law School when Humphrey received the Democratic nomination for President. I was asked to join the campaign staff—if he won, this would have given me an inside track to a White House job—but I declined because Humphrey had not satisfied the requirements of my conscience by renouncing the Vietnam war. I took a clerkship instead with Judge Spottswood Robinson, who in 1954, in tandem with Thurgood Marshall and others, had argued *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. Next came a job with the restoration project established by Robert F. Kennedy in the black neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn. I was visiting all the stations of the liberal cross.

Living in Brooklyn, active in "Reform" Democratic politics, I found myself in a newly drawn state senate district perfectly suited to a candidate of my stripe. The reform leaders gave me the nod. I was in my late twenties, a cinch to get elected, and I believed I could quickly rise from there to national office. Others thought so, too, and volunteered to run my campaign. But with the machinery nearly in place, I began to ask myself if I really wanted a career as a politician, a field in which success depended on saying what went down well and glad-handing day and night. I told my supporters thanks but no thanks, and withdrew.

Instead, I joined a group of ardent young attorneys who, in the afterglow of the first Earth Day, were launching the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), a nonprofit legal group dedicated to making the most of the nation's newly enact-

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ed environmental statutes. I decided to specialize in helping the poor and the weak, just as my father and grandfather would have wanted. My first case, filed in 1972, was to protect children from lead in gasoline. For the rest of the decade, I mobilized and led the environmental forces in this cause.

IT WAS the campaign against lead that shattered my smugness, but only in the end. At first I had no doubt that I was heading an ennobling crusade. In the 1960's, physicians had discovered that lead was killing thousands of young children and permanently crippling the brains of many more. Although initially the finger pointed to the lead put into house paint before 1950, suspicion soon turned to gasoline additives. The dust of city streets was as rich in lead as lead ore, and the toddlers most exposed to that dust lived in poor urban neighborhoods. But the wealthy, too, including the people who swelled the early environmental movement, had cause to worry about their children. "GET THE LEAD OUT," the bumper stickers were soon demanding.

Pushed by popular demand, Congress passed the Clean Air Act in 1970 with hardly a dissenting vote, and President Nixon signed it with great fanfare. But the statute took no concrete action to curb lead as a health hazard. All it did was to erect an abstract ideal—healthy air—and delegate responsibility for realizing that ideal to the newly created Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The agency was ordered to follow a statutorily prescribed process designed to protect health from a number of dangerous pollutants by a certain deadline. The deadline for lead was January 1976. Should EPA falter in doing its duty, any citizen could bring suit in federal court. At NRDC, we were set up to do just that.

Here was government the way an elitist like me thought it ought to be. Experts were empowered to achieve an ideal, and I was empowered to make sure they did.

By 1972, when I joined NRDC, EPA had yet to start the statutory process to protect health from lead. I won victory after victory against the agency in the courts and in the various scientific tribunals established by the statute. But I did not get the lead out. By the 1976 deadline, EPA's deliberations had yet to produce any reduction in emissions.

The problem, I reasoned at the time, was that the Republicans held the White House. But when the Democrats took control in 1977, EPA still dragged its feet. The lead industry and the gasoline refiners had made it worthwhile for members of Congress, including the liberal Democrats who sponsored the Clean Air Act, to pressure the administration to go slowly. These legislators paid no political price for their delaying tactics because the pressure was applied behind the scenes, not by open votes in Congress.

In the meantime, studies were suggesting that the lead levels in even the average child in New York City in the 1970's were causing a measurable, though small, loss in IQ. Other studies suggested that some children absorbed far more lead from gasoline than the average, enough to bring on death or severe brain damage. With the stakes so high, it seemed I should try harder, do more. Like my father, I had gone to war, or so it felt. Unlike him, I had achieved high office, with media exposure to match. But although I was covered with a kind of glory, I had not produced justice. I left NRDC in 1979 after seven years, a biblical span of labor.

HOW COULD it be that government by elite had failed so miserably? Seeking detachment and time to reflect, I joined the faculty of New York University Law School, intending to think through a way of keeping legislators from interfering with the experts to whom they delegated authority. But I soon concluded that any such scheme would have things backward. It is proper in a representative democracy for people vexed by an agency to appeal to their representatives, and for the representatives to react by lobbying the agency. The real question was, how could the representatives themselves be made to bear responsibility?

Only then did it slowly dawn on me that the Constitution already provided the answer. It contemplates that the laws—that is, the rules of conduct—be made in statutes enacted by the legislators themselves. But the Clean Air Act, like most other regulatory statutes, had empowered an agency to make the laws by regulation. The difference was critical.

As it happens, Congress actually did pass a law in 1970 requiring auto manufacturers to make new cars that would emit 90-percent less of certain pollutants. Although lead was not among them, manufacturers seeking to comply with the law might have to equip cars with pollution-control devices that would not work with leaded gas. If so, EPA was directed to require refiners to provide lead-free gasoline.

The legislators could not, and did not, tell voters in 1970 that this provision would get the lead out. (Even after lead-free gas came to be required, cleaner cars would not become available until 1975; in that year, about 100 million older cars were still

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burning leaded gasoline, and would continue to do so well into the 1980's.) And in any case, the legislators were unwilling to ban all lead in all gasoline. The price at the pump would have jumped a few cents—which would have been noticeable back then when gas prices were lower and more stable—and the legislators would have gotten the blame. In other words, the obstacle to satisfying the people's demand to get the lead out was that the people also wanted cheap gasoline. To escape from that predicament, Congress resorted to delegation.

But what if delegation had not been an option? In all likelihood, Congress would then have enacted a law removing *most* of the lead from gasoline before the mid-1970's: an obvious and sensible compromise that would have eliminated much of the health threat for only a tiny increase in the price at the pump. But instead of enacting such a law, which would have been good for the American people, the legislators—thanks to delegation—enacted a law that was perfect for themselves, with the consequence that the bulk of the lead was left in gasoline for many additional years and millions of children were harmed. It was only in the mid-1980's that EPA got really tough on lead. By then, most of the old cars using leaded gasoline had been junked. The experts "solved" the problem after it had gone away.

AS THE professor that I had become, I might have rationalized away this particular governmental failure as an anomaly. But by then I had come within the gravitational pull of a perspective far different from the elitist one in which I had been reared and educated. The conventional argument for delegating is that our laws should be based on scientific expertise. But "science" hardly ever settles policy disputes, and EPA's actions were and are, in the end, motivated by politics. Another conventional argument for delegating is that Congress lacks the time to consider all the laws that the national government imposes. But the national government imposes so many laws only because of delegation and its close cousin, unfunded mandates.

When legislators themselves enact the laws, they must take responsibility for the rights granted and the duties imposed. When, by contrast, they empower an agency to enact the laws in pursuit of some high-minded ideal, the actual rights and duties come under the agency's letterhead. That way, the legislators get to take credit for the promised benefits, which they paint in the rosiest of hues, while shifting to the agency, or to the states, the blame for disappointments and costs. The scope of regulatory government inevitably expands, simultaneously becoming ever more distant from the machinery of popular complaint and redress.

At the time, this new way of seeing things infuriated and frightened me. I had been brought up to believe that if I worked hard and rose to power, I could use that power in a noble cause while filling my own heart to overflowing. Now I knew that I had participated in a sham. The heroic role I had assumed—defending the people's supposed right to healthy air—only lent credence to the representatives' claims to have bestowed that right. But what about the palpable harm done by the failure of those same representatives to see that their promise was fulfilled by the experts to whom they had deferred? A prop had been kicked out from under my sense of identity.

Worse yet, I felt repelled by my own heresy. To support transferring power and responsibility from experts in the executive branch to politicians in Congress—the position I had now come to believe in—seemed like rooting against Jimmy Stewart in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. (Though a Senator himself, Mr. Smith finds the legislature riddled with greed and corruption, while idealism resides in the executive.) And some of my new academic colleagues were also unhappy with my views. They thought they had hired a conventional liberal like themselves, only to find on their hands a heretic who had yet to convince himself fully of his own heresy. The dean told me my scholarship was not good enough because it reached an unreasonable conclusion—that delegation should be stopped—and in my fourth year at NYU the school let me know that I would be wise to resign.

NEVER BEFORE had I suffered a setback in my career, and I was mortified at being cashiered from the elite. How far would I fall? Would I, like Grandfather Schoenbrod, end up in a law office waiting for the phone to ring? Fortunately, I got an offer from New York Law School. It was lower than NYU in the pecking order, but the discernible difference in the students was not their intelligence but their socioeconomic class. Most of them were children of ordinary people, and many of them, like my own grandparents, were the children of immigrants. Here was a good place to try to work out the implications of my apostasy.

Funnily enough, I began to find the seeds of a resolution in memories of my own family—in this case, on my mother's rather than on my father's side. Although both my grandfathers were born in 1883 and were reared in Chicago by Jewish families recently immigrated from Eastern Europe, my mother's father's family was less prosperous and less

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intellectual. Grandfather Marschak, as a boy, had frequented Hull House, which Jane Addams opened when he was six and where she had exposed poor immigrants to middle-class aspirations and attempted to inculcate the sense of responsibility required to achieve them. In his early teens, he was taken out of school and put to work in the family's little hardware store. With his help, and ultimately under his direction, the store turned from hardware to furniture and grew large.

Grandfather Marschak was a father to me while my own father was at war. When he returned, the political schism in the family came out in a running debate in the living room of our modest apartment. My father spoke for the socialist side: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs. Grandfather Marschak responded that it was against human nature for people to work hard if the fruits of their labor went to strangers. Father countered that a socialist government would change people so that they would share with others as readily as they shared with brothers. Grandfather objected that human nature could not be changed. On that point, they reached an impasse.

If these were the constants in the debate, what changed from Sunday to Sunday were the anecdotes and quotations invoked by the debaters. One of those quotations turned up a half-century later in a dust-covered box of remembrances that my mother kept of her father. On a scrap of paper he had penciled in his largely unschooled hand a quotation from Thomas Jefferson: "We both consider the people as our children and love them with parental affection, but you love them as infants whom you are afraid to trust without nurses—and I as adults whom I freely leave to self-government."*

Grandfather Marschak died when I was fifteen, and I, growing up in my father's house, was reared to be one of the "nurses." But I now understood that, for Grandfather Marschak, self-government, or government "by the people"—he also knew Lincoln's Gettysburg Address by heart, and had recited it to me often while my father was at war—was not just a pretty figure of political speech. Jane Addams had taught him that the lower classes had no lesser capacity for leadership than their supposed betters. For him, every individual was entitled to the dignity of his own values and must accept responsibility for the consequences of his own actions. By this light, elitists had no right to try to impose their ideals by fiat in the name of improving human nature. To the contrary, high officials should be accountable to ordinary people with their ordinary human natures.

NOW THAT I am old enough to be a grandfather myself, I see that this story is not peculiar to me and my family, but is a story of our society. The 20th century dawned with a burst of hope that, thanks to science and progress, an expert elite would lead humanity toward high-minded ends. A new class of Americans arose: the executives who ran businesses, the heads of bureaus in Washington who oversaw them, the top professors at the top universities who trained them, and the nationally-oriented journalists who informed them. This new elite set out to redesign government to enable its kind of people—reasonable, objective, idealistic, professional—to rule over society without much accountability to voters. Power was transferred from states and cities to Washington and, within Washington, from elected legislators to appointed experts and judges. By the time the New Dealers, socialists, environmentalists, and others came along, the ground had already been laid for government by experts insulated from electoral politics.

But the elite idea that ordinary people are too unreasonable and unobjective mixes up the role of the representative and the role of the voter in an indirect democracy. Our form of government sets in motion a dialogue between elected lawmakers and the people who must live under their laws, a dialogue in which the people learn what is really possible and the lawmakers learn, sometimes painfully, and at the cost of their jobs, how the people feel about what they have done.

Good voters in an indirect democracy do not need to see other people's points of view any more than a smart consumer needs to be capable of managing the national economy. What good voters need is to understand their own interest and to accept that sometimes the legislature will decide against them. An electorate made up of people with diverse interests and diverse ideals, even if none of them is objective or reasonable, will tend to pressure their representatives in reasonable directions.

By contrast, government the elite way is sure to be unreasonable—as well as centralizing, enlarging, manipulative, and unresponsive. That, to me, is the lesson of delegation, a lesson that goes far beyond the example of lead to the very basis and purpose of democratic governance. Forgive me, Grandfather Schoenbrod, but if we the people do not look out for ourselves, no one else will.

* This is from a letter written in 1816 to Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours, a French aristocrat and the progenitor of one of America's first industrial powerhouses.

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"How Dare You Defame Islam"

Daniel Pipes

THE PROBLEM began in January 1989. That was when Muslims living in Bradford, England, decided to do something to show their anger about *The Satanic Verses*, a new novel by the famed writer Salman Rushdie that included passages making fun of the Prophet Muhammad. The Muslims, mostly Pakistani immigrants, purchased a copy of the novel, took it to a public square, attached it to a stake, and set it on fire. Television news showed this *auto da fé* in scandalized detail, and pictures of the scene were splashed across the British media for days, making it a major topic of discussion throughout the country.

In Pakistan itself, after a month's buildup, an unruly mob of some 10,000 anti-Rushdie protesters took to the streets of the capital city of Islamabad. Marching to the American Cultural Center (a fact significant in itself), they attempted with great energy, but without success, to set the heavily fortified building on fire. Six people died in the violence, and many more were injured.

These events, in turn, caught the attention of Ayatollah Khomeini, the revolutionary ruler of Iran, who took prompt and drastic action: on February 14, 1989, he called upon "all zealous Muslims quickly to execute" not just Salman Rushdie as the author of *The Satanic Verses* but "all those involved in its publication who were aware of its content." This edict led to emergency measures in England to protect Rushdie's person, and to weeks and months of intense debate among the world's politicians and intellectuals about the issues of freedom of speech and blasphemy.

When the dust settled, Khomeini had failed in his specific goal of eliminating Rushdie physically: today, over a decade later, the author is once again writing well-received books and accepting literary awards. But if Khomeini did not manage to harm Rushdie, he did accomplish something far more profound: he stirred the souls of many Muslims, reviving a sense of confidence in their faith and a strong impatience with any denigration of it, as well as a determination to take the offensive against anyone perceived to be a blasphemer or even a critic. Although Khomeini himself passed from the scene just weeks after issuing his decree, the spirit it engendered is very much alive.

DURING THE decade since 1989, many efforts have been undertaken by the forces of Islamism—otherwise known as Muslim fundamentalism—to silence critics. Ranging from outright violence to more sophisticated but no less effective techniques, they have produced impressive results.

Some early acts of physical intimidation involved the Rushdie case itself. Translators of *The Satanic Verses* were stabbed and seriously injured in Nor-

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way and Italy and, in Japan, murdered. In Turkey, another translator escaped when a fire set in his hotel failed to kill him, but 37 others died in the blaze. Other acts of violence were designed to punish both Muslims and non-Muslims for a variety of alleged offenses.

Egypt alone offers a number of examples. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, a professor of literature who wrote that certain references in the Qur'an to supernatural phenomena should be read as metaphors, found his marriage dissolved by an Egyptian court on the grounds that his writings proved him an apostate. (According to Islamic law, a Muslim woman may not be married to a non-Muslim.) Another case involved the author of a nonconformist essay on Islam: he, his publisher, and the book's printer were each sentenced to eight years in jail on the charge of blasphemy. Farag Foda, an Egyptian intellectual who expressed scorn for the Islamist program, was shot and murdered. And Naguib Mahfouz, the elderly and much-celebrated Nobel Prize laureate for literature, was seriously injured in Cairo when an assailant knifed him in the neck, presumably in revenge for an allegorical novel written decades earlier.

Nor has the campaign been limited to Muslim-majority countries. Makin Morcos, also an Egyptian, was killed in Australia for criticizing the Islamists' anti-Christian campaign in his native country; Rashad Khalifa, a biochemist from Egypt living in Tucson, Arizona, was stabbed to death in January 1990 to silence his heretical ideas. (A member of Usama bin Laden's gang has been implicated in the latter murder.) Both these incidents sent a chilling message: you can run but you cannot hide.

NOR, FINALLY, is the campaign in Western countries limited to violence or threats of violence against Muslims; it also extends to non-Muslims. In some cases, purely private matters may be at issue: Jack Briggs, an Englishman, has been on the lam for years, hiding with his wife from her Pakistani family who have vowed to kill both of them (even though they are properly married and even though he converted to Islam to win their approval). Other cases concern publicly expressed views: Steven Emerson, a former Senate aide and investigative reporter for *U.S. News & World Report*, CNN, and other media, received death threats for *Jihad in America*, his award-winning television documentary that drew on the Islamists' own commercial videos to demonstrate their virulently anti-Semitic and anti-American views and activities.

Emerson told his story to a congressional committee in 1998, and it bears quoting at length:

> Immediately following the release of *Jihad in America*, I became the target of radical fundamentalist groups throughout the United States (and internationally) who fiercely denied the existence of "Islamic extremism" and accused me of engaging in an "attack against Islam." For this "transgression," my life has been permanently changed.
>
> Explaining the details of just one incident—to pick among a whole series—will help you understand the changes I have been forced to endure. One morning, in late 1995, I was paged by a federal law-enforcement official. When I returned the call, this official immediately instructed me to head downtown to his office and specifically directed me to take a taxi rather than my car. The urgency in this person's voice was palpable. When I arrived at the office, I was ushered into a room where a group of other law-enforcement officials was waiting. Within minutes, I found out why I had been summoned: I was told a group of radical Islamic fundamentalists had been assigned to carry out an assassination of me. An actual hit team had been dispatched from another country to the United States. The squad, according to the available intelligence, was to rendezvous with its American-based colleagues located in several U.S. cities. Compounding the jolt of being told about this threat was an additional piece of information: the assassination squad had been successfully able to elude law-enforcement surveillance.
>
> I was told that I had limited choices: since I was not a full-time government employee, I was not entitled to 24-hour-a-day police protection. However, I could probably get permission to enter the Witness Security Program under the right circumstances. But the prospect of being spirited away and given a new identity was not acceptable to me—especially since that would afford the terrorists a moral victory in having shut me down. Frankly, however, the alternative option was not that attractive either—being on my own and taking my own chances. And yet that for me was the only effective option.

While Emerson remains doggedly on the trail of Islamists, especially those among them who support terrorism, he has for four years been forced to live at a clandestine address, always watching his movements. Like the case of Rashad Khalifa, murdered in Tucson for his views, the case of Steven

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Emerson suggests that, despite the Constitution's guarantees of freedom of religion and freedom of speech, when it comes to Islam, unapproved thinking can lead to personal danger or even death.

Still, were force the only weapon in the Islamists' arsenal, their accomplishments would be limited. In the West, at least, violence and physical intimidation can achieve only so much. But, contrary to stereotype, Islamists are hardly all wild-eyed hit men and suicide bombers; in Western countries, many of them are quite at home with computers, well-versed in the latest lobbying techniques, and adept at the game of victimology. Energetic, determined, and skilled, they employ the tools not of physical but rather of intellectual intimidation. Their aim in doing so is to build an inviolate wall around Islam, endowing it with something like the sacrosanct status it enjoys in traditionally Muslim countries.

Islamists of this latter stripe make full use of every recourse available to them in the laws and customs of the Western liberal democracies themselves. A few examples will illustrate. In France, Marcel Lefebvre, a renegade Catholic bishop, was fined nearly $1,000 under French law for declaring that when the Muslim presence in France becomes stronger, "it is your wives, your daughters, your children who will be kidnapped and dragged off to a certain kind of place as they exist in [Morocco]." In Canada, a Christian activist handing out leaflets protesting the Muslim persecution of Christians was accused by Muslim organizations of "inciting hatred," found guilty of breaking Canada's hate-speech laws, and sentenced to 240 hours of community service and six months of probation time in jail. At the United Nations, the decidedly non-diplomatic epithets "blasphemy" and "defamation of Islam" have become part of normal discourse, serving as convenient instruments for shutting off discussion of such unpleasant matters as slavery in Sudan or Muslim anti-Semitism.

In the United States, where the concept of freedom of speech is sturdier than elsewhere, the First Amendment still prevents the government itself from fining or jailing anyone for offensive speech. But, relying on the ethos of political correctness that has resulted in such abridgements of First Amendment freedoms as university speech codes and other restrictive practices, Islamists seek to win what sanction they can to censor others. Thus, they have recently sponsored an innocent-sounding Senate resolution entitled "Supporting Religious Tolerance Toward Muslims." This resolution states as a fact that "Muslims have been subjected, simply because of their faith, to acts of discrimination and harassment that all too often have led to hate-inspired violence," and concludes that criticism of Islam, though legal in the strict sense, is morally reprehensible ("the Senate acknowledges that individuals and organizations that foster such intolerance create an atmosphere of hatred and fear that divides the Nation"). Should this resolution pass, and there is every reason to expect that it will, anyone with anything negative to say about Islam or Islamism can expect to be accused of fostering a hate crime.

Who, in the American context, is behind this campaign of mental intimidation and of what, in a journalistic context, would be called prior restraint? Among the many candidates, the leading one is surely the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a Washington-based institution founded in 1994. CAIR presents itself to the world as a standard-issue civil-rights organization, whose mission is to "promote interest and understanding among the general public with regard to Islam and Muslims in North America and conduct educational services."

Sometimes, indeed, this is what CAIR does. In 1997, for example, it protested when an official at a meeting of a board of education in South Carolina said, "Screw the Buddhists and kill the Muslims." At other times, it has come to the defense of women who have lost their jobs for insisting on wearing a headscarf, or of men for wearing beards. But these occasional good works serve mostly as a cover for CAIR's real agenda, which appears to be twofold: to help the radical organization Hamas in its terror campaign against Israel, and to promote the Islamist program in the United States.

In furtherance of the first goal, CAIR regularly sends out "action alerts" to instigate dozens or even hundreds of protests, many of them vulgar and aggressive, whenever anyone dares to suggest publicly that Hamas or other terrorist networks operate in the United States, or indeed dares to support those who say such things. When Jeff Jacoby, a columnist for the *Boston Globe*, protested CAIR's almost successful effort to have Steven Emerson blacklisted from National Public Radio, CAIR cranked up its letter-writing campaign ("Dear JEW," went a characteristic missive from a CAIR minion, "How dare you defame Islam. . . . There is enough Muslim-bashing going on, I am sure your resigning will not make a difference to our jewish [*sic*] media") and, in a bit of raw intimidation, threatened the *Globe* with legal action.

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CAIR's defense of Islamist violence takes other forms as well: picketing the *Dallas Morning News* for revealing the Hamas infrastructure in Texas, launching a campaign against the *Tampa Tribune* for uncovering the Islamic Jihad network in that city. The group has inveighed against the *Journal of the American Medical Association* for investigating the medical condition of victims of terrorism, and against a children's magazine, *The Weekly Reader's Current Events*, for publishing material on international terrorism. CAIR denounced the *Atlantic Monthly* for publishing an article on Islamist violence in Sudan, and a Senate Subcommittee for holding a hearing on "Foreign Terrorists in America: Five Years After the World Trade Center Bombing."

AS FOR its other goal—promoting Islamism in the United States—CAIR focuses on the single tactic of trying to silence those who have anything critical to say about Islam. It attacked the Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles for portraying Ayatollah Khomeini as a Hitler-like enemy of Jews, and it went after the *Reader's Digest* for documenting the repression of Christians in several Muslim countries. When James Jatras, a Senate aide, published in his private capacity a stinging critique of Islam ("a self-evident outgrowth not of the Old and New Covenants but of the darkness of heathen Araby"), CAIR took out a full-page newspaper ad in the *Washington Times* calling for his dismissal. And when Father Richard John Neuhaus, the distinguished author and editor of *First Things*, outspokenly condemned contemporary Islam's "resentments and suspicions, alternating with low-grade *jihad* in the form of the persecution of Christians, international terrorism, and dreams of driving Israel into the sea," CAIR called on the Catholic Church to "investigate" Neuhaus, and its supporters sent a cascade of abusive mail accusing him of being "obviously mentally ill" and "doing the work of Adolf Hitler."

Even lesser provocations than these elicit a barrage of CAIR-inspired letters that can leave writers and editors feeling isolated and under siege. A case in point indirectly involves the Oslo peace process. Beginning in May 1995, Yasir Arafat, having entered into negotiations with Israel, took to defending himself before Arab audiences by alluding cryptically to the treaty of Hudaybiyah, signed by the Prophet Muhammad in 628 C.E. Dusting off their history books, American commentators mostly concluded that, in invoking an agreement signed but then subsequently broken by Muhammad when circumstances changed, Arafat was signaling that he, too, did not really mean to keep his pledge. Arafat's intentions aside, however, it was the suggestion that the Prophet Muhammad had gone back on his word that aroused CAIR's fury. So impassioned was the reaction when Mortimer B. Zuckerman, editor-in-chief of *U.S. News & World Report*, referred in a column to "the doctrine of the prophet Muhammad of making treaties with enemies while he is weak, violating them when he is strong," that the magazine ended up printing not one but two apologies.

A flavor of what CAIR and its network of letter writers were capable of producing on this occasion may be gleaned from the pages of the *New Republic*, where a similar statement had been made by Yehoshua Porath, an eminent professor of Middle East history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This statement ("Muhammad broke the [Hudaybiya] agreement eighteen months after its conclusion") elicited, according to the magazine's editors, "hundreds of abusive phone calls, letters, and e-mail accusing us of defamation of the Prophet and worse." Among the letters published by the editors, all in their original grammar and spelling, one read:

> You guys had better watch out, ok? Because this is not going to go on further anymore, ok? You'd better watch out that f*ing Jew . . . tell him where he is coming from, ok? Because you know mother-f*er bastard, mother—his mom is a bastard. ok? He can't talk about Muslim shit and you get your act together . . . all of you. We don't want to hear anymore about this problem, ok? You got that right?

Another was more threatening:

> The jews from back in history were the ugly decievers and BLOOD SUCKERS. . . . It is importatn that an apology is issued to calm down the MUSLIM all over the world. WE DO NO WANT TO SEE ANOTHER 19 AMERICANS GO A WSAY IN THA LAND OF THE PROPHET ,,, DO WE ??????? !!!!!! I am saying this because the Muslims will never tolerate the actions of the jews agains their religion. And articels like these contribute in the future loss of life of Anmericans all over the Islamic world. . . . We are fed up of filthy jews robbing our lands, and defaming all HOLY concepts we have. Please, save the lives of few Americans by issuing your apology.

Which brings me to my own case. In mid-1999, I published articles in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *National Post* (Toronto) emphasizing the distinction between, on the one hand, traditional Muslims

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who go quietly about their business and ask only to be allowed to practice their faith, and, on the other, radical Islamists with their agenda of transforming society in the image of their beliefs. In reply, CAIR launched fifteen separate attacks on me in the space of two months. Many of these, reaching all the way back to 1983, cited random quotations from articles and books in order to indict me out of my own mouth, or resurrected unflattering appraisals of my work by others. One bulletin attempted to demolish an article I had written about the treaty of Hudaybiya—even though, contrary to other American commentators, I had found that "Muhammad was technically within his rights to abrogate the treaty." The broadside was titled "Daniel Pipes Smears Prophet Muhammad": fighting words for many Muslims.

Reverberating through the Internet, CAIR's attacks were also widely reprinted in Muslim publications, spurring dozens of letters, overwhelmingly negative, to the two newspapers that had carried my articles. One such letter urged me to enroll in sensitivity training (at CAIR, naturally), while others branded me with harsh names ("bigot and racist"), compared me to the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, or characterized my writings as an "atrocity" filled with "pure poison" and "outright lies." More alarmingly, the letters accused me either of perpetrating a hate crime against Muslims or of promoting and abetting such crimes. And they did not stop short of vague threats: "Is Pipes ready to answer the Creator for his hatred or is he a secular humanist . . . ? He will soon find out."

I do not want to leave the impression that CAIR represents the *only* opinion to be found in the Muslim community, either here or abroad. Shaykh Abdad Hadi Palazzi, for instance, secretary general of the Italian Muslim Association and director of the Cultural Institute of the Italian Muslim Community in Rome, has actually denounced CAIR for falsely claiming to represent the entire Muslim community while in reality being bent on launching "hate campaigns against journalists, Congressmen, Senators, and Muslims who interfere with [its] true terrorist agenda." What is more, Shaykh Palazzi has commended both me and Steven Emerson for daring to challenge the Islamists; though he does "not agree with [our] attitude toward Islam in particular and with [our] secular worldview in general," nevertheless we are to be lauded for distinguishing "authentic Islam from the counterfeit image presented by the Islamists"—of whom, the Shaykh pointedly concludes, Muslims themselves "are the main victims."

But Shaykh Palazzi is one among only a few voices of reason and sanity. Within the universe of Muslims who speak and write about Islam and its position in the modern world, the Islamists by far have the upper hand. That is not only a great tragedy for Muslims, but a danger to the rest of us. For if the Islamists have their way, any possibility of speaking the truth not only about them but about Islam itself will be foreclosed. Indeed, to a certain extent, as in the near-successful blacklisting of Steven Emerson at National Public Radio, it already has been.

Bernard Lewis, the renowned scholar of Islam and the Middle East, has noted with asperity that whereas, in this Christian country, an English-language biographer of Jesus enjoys total latitude to say what he will and as he will, his counterpart working on a biography of Muhammad must look fearfully over his shoulder every step of the way. About my own writing, one correspondent protested to the *National Post*: "It's is interesting to me as a Muslim American to hear you, a non-Muslim, speaks about Islam as an expert without you first consulting with an American Muslim organization like CAIR for an example, to get their opinion about what you are about to print." In other words, one is perfectly free to voice an opinion about Islam, provided that one has vetted its contents beforehand with the Islamists—roughly the situation that now prevails in Iran.

What the Islamists are demanding, in short, is that the United States take a giant step toward applying within its borders the strictures of Islamic law (the *shari'a*) itself. A basic premise of that body of law is that no one, and especially no non-Muslim, may openly discuss certain subjects—some of the very subjects, as it happens, that CAIR wishes to render taboo. However absurd this may seem to a casual observer—Muslims, after all, make up, at most, 2 percent of the U.S. population—it is a fact that, when the guard of the democratic majority is let down, determined minorities in pursuit of anti-democratic aims can sometimes get their way.

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MUSIC

Masterpieces of Jazz: A Critical Guide

Terry Teachout

EARLY IN the 20th century, a new kind of dance music—a syncopated, semi-improvised hybrid of ragtime, brass-band music, popular song, and the blues—began to be heard in New Orleans and other American cities. It had coalesced into an identifiable style by 1910, and around that time came to be called "jazz," a term whose etymology is as elusive as the origins of the music itself. In 1917, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band made the first recordings of jazz; just 21 years later, the jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman and his orchestra performed at Carnegie Hall, then as now the best-known concert hall in America. By that time, even those who still believed jazz to be vulgar fare fit only for the masses suspected that it was here to stay.

Jazz long ago evolved into an art music, studied in colleges and universities and heard as often in concert halls as in night clubs. One critic has gone so far as to dub it "America's classical music." Yet at the same time, it remains an essentially *popular* music, in keeping with its humble utilitarian origins as an accompaniment to social dancing. (The current revival of swing dancing has introduced a whole new generation of listeners to the big-band jazz of the 30's.) Perhaps for this reason, it has become one of this country's chief cultural exports, and is now generally ranked alongside the movies as the most important art form to have originated in the U.S.

Jazz criticism and scholarship, however, have developed more slowly than the music itself, in part because jazz is usually improvised rather than composed, thus making it harder to study formally. To date, there have been no more than a dozen or so jazz critics of genuine stature, while the number of first-rate scholarly biographies can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The only fully effective means of documenting jazz performance styles is through recordings, and the fact that such recordings did not begin to be made in significant numbers until 1923 means there has not yet been sufficient time for a jazz "canon" to win more than tentative acceptance.

Not surprisingly, most attempts to draw up jazz canons have been marred by idiosyncrasy and poor scholarship.* A case in point is *The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*, a 1973 anthology of 84 recordings selected by the late Martin Williams and issued by the Smithsonian Institution, in which a large number of key figures failed to make the cut, with others receiving token or otherwise misleading representation. More recently, outright historical illiteracy has been at least partly to blame for the exclusionary quasi-canon devised by Stanley Crouch and Albert Murray and promulgated by Wynton Marsalis and "Jazz at Lincoln Center," in which white musicians of the past play no significant part.†

IT IS thus in the interest of clarifying our historical understanding of

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* A conspicuous exception to this rule is the annotated list of 250 jazz LP's compiled by the British critics Max Harrison, Charles Fox, and Eric Thacker, and published in 1984 as *The Essential Jazz Records: Volume One, Ragtime to Swing*. A second volume is about to be published in England.

† The Crouch-Murray-Marsalis "canon" is discussed in my article, "The Color of Jazz," COMMENTARY, September 1995.

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jazz at century's end that I have drawn up the following list of 65 recorded masterpieces. This list, which I shall present in three installments, is modeled after my "counter-canon" of modern masterpieces of classical music that appeared in COMMENTARY earlier this year.* In compiling it, I applied broadly similar criteria:

• Just as my list of modern classical masterpieces (which included no works by living composers) ended in 1969, the time span covered by the present list runs from 1923, when jazz began to be recorded in earnest, to 1972, the year that "fusion," an amalgam of jazz and rock-and-roll, first won widespread popularity. No subsequent stylistic development has commanded comparable loyalty, and the musicians who have come to prominence since then have mainly been neoclassicists of one sort or another. Meanwhile, virtually all the major exponents of pre-1960 jazz have died or retired, while the leading players of the 60's and early 70's are increasingly regarded as elder statesmen, making it possible to discuss their work in something like a definitive manner.

• Even though it is far shorter, I have consciously sought to make this list more diverse than *The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*, which gave disproportionate coverage to certain musicians.† Eight recordings by Duke Ellington, for example, were included in the Smithsonian set; I have chosen instead to represent artists like Ellington and Louis Armstrong by only two performances each, not counting their appearances as sidemen on other recordings.

• As in my classical list, these recordings were not chosen because they were "influential" (though many have been, some greatly so) or to strike a "balance" of any kind, racial or otherwise. Each one was picked for its musical excellence. Similarly, none is an all-star "catch-all," included so as to cover the largest possible number of miscellaneous names in one fell swoop. As a result, a number of performers who ought to have been represented—among them the trumpeter Bunny Berigan, the trombonist J. J. Johnson, and the pianist-arranger Mary Lou Williams—are instead conspicuous by their absence, very much to my regret.

• Except for Louis Armstrong, I have omitted all vocalists (though a number of other instrumentalists are included who also became known, like Armstrong, for their singing). I believe that "jazz singing" is best understood and discussed as a variety of American popular singing, about which I intend to write at a later date.

• I have listed individual works, not full-length albums, which for the most part did not exist prior to the invention of the LP in 1948. The albums recommended through 1951 are anthologies devoted to individual artists, and in all cases contain other significant recordings not on the list. Thus, anyone who purchases all 65 recommended performances will in the process acquire a wide-ranging "five-foot shelf" of great recorded jazz on CD.

Any list like this one is both provisional and personal. These records are, first and foremost, 65 of my favorites. Some are less familiar than others—I have not felt bound by critical precedent—and a few choices will no doubt seem controversial. Nevertheless, I believe they are all masterpieces, and that, taken together, they paint an accurate sound picture of the first half-century of recorded jazz.

This month's installment, in chronological order by date of recording, takes us up to 1937 and the dawn of the swing era, the decade when big-band jazz became the lingua franca of American popular music—a convenient resting place.

1923

1. New Orleans Rhythm Kings
Tin Roof Blues

The earliest jazz recordings of permanent musical interest were made by two Chicago-based groups consisting mainly of musicians from New Orleans. Both played in the "classic" New Orleans style in which the contrapuntal interplay of clarinet, cornet, and trombone was emphasized over individual solos—though the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, a quintet of white players who performed in a relaxed, light-textured style, also boasted in Leon Roppolo (1902-43) a strikingly lyrical clarinetist, perhaps the first truly distinguished jazz soloist to be heard on record. "Tin Roof Blues," which later became a Dixieland staple (and later still a pop song, "Make Love to Me"), features one of Roppolo's most intensely personal solos.

"Tin Roof Blues" is included on *Lost Chords: A Musical Companion*, an anthology of 49 performances discussed in Richard M. Sudhalter's pioneering book, *Lost Chords: White Musicians and Their Contribution to Jazz, 1915-1945*, and reproduced in exceptionally clear transfers from issued 78's (Retrieval RTR 79018, two CD's).

2. King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band
Dipper Mouth Blues

Joe "King" Oliver (1885-1938) led the first great black jazz ensemble to make records. Several members of his Creole Jazz Band—among them Johnny and Warren "Baby" Dodds on clarinet and drums and a young man from New Orleans, Louis Armstrong, who played second cornet to Oliver's lead—would become deservedly famous in their own right. But Oliver's own blues-drenched playing was central to the group's initial appeal. His three-chorus solo on "Dipper Mouth Blues" (named after Armstrong's large mouth, which won him the nickname "Satchelmouth," later

* The three-part series was published in the April, May, and June issues.

† In 1987, an expanded and revised second edition containing 95 recordings was released, but only some of the failings of the original version were remedied in the process.

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shortened to "Satchmo") became a set piece reproduced verbatim by younger cornetists and trumpeters, Armstrong included, whenever the song was played.

The first of two versions of "Dippermouth Blues" recorded by the Oliver band in 1923 is on *Louis Armstrong and King Oliver* (Milestone MCD-47017-2).

1924

3. Clarence Williams's Blue Five
Texas Moaner Blues

Armstrong (1900-71) left the Oliver band in 1924 to pursue his own musical interests, and within months made it clear that he was not merely another talented New Orleans cornetist but a soloist of astonishing force and individuality, whose golden tone and rhythmic poise quickly put him at the forefront of jazz. In this sober yet surgingly vital 1924 performance, he is heard alongside the clarinetist and soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet (1897-1959), an equally commanding player who might have become as famous as Armstrong had he not spent much of the 20's working in Europe.

An Introduction to Sidney Bechet: His Best Recordings, 1923-1941 also contains an excellent selection of later recordings Bechet made with his own small groups (Best of Jazz 4017).

1927

4. Frank Trumbauer and Bix Beiderbecke
Singin' the Blues

The white cornetist Bix Beiderbecke (1903-31), who began recording around the same time as Armstrong and Bechet, was a soloist of directly comparable individuality and significance, though his style was as different from theirs as night from day. An elegant melodist with a chime-like tone and an interest in the harmonic techniques of such modern French composers as Debussy and Ravel, Beiderbecke offered a gentler alternative to the bluesy exuberance of Armstrong. "Singin' the Blues," which was almost as influential as Armstrong's "West End Blues" (see below under No. 8), is memorable not only for Beiderbecke's beautifully organized solo but also for the dryly witty C-melody saxophone playing of Frank Trumbauer, his friend and colleague.

An Introduction to Bix Beiderbecke: His Best Recordings, 1922-1931 includes a good selection of small-group sides by Beiderbecke and Trumbauer, as well as several performances by the orchestras of Jean Goldkette and Paul Whiteman on which the cornetist is featured. The unfairly maligned Whiteman led a remarkable ensemble—among the first large instrumental groups to play jazz—in which Beiderbecke, Trumbauer, and the innovative arranger Bill Challis, who scored the version of "Lonely Melody" heard on this CD, played prominent roles (Best of Jazz 4012).

5, 6. Jelly Roll Morton
The Pearls
Wolverine Blues

Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton (1890-1941) was one of the first jazz musicians to win distinction as a composer and arranger. In such ensemble pieces as "The Pearls," based on an earlier Morton composition for solo piano, the characteristic techniques of ragtime and New Orleans jazz are incorporated into tightly structured, colorfully scored vignettes. Morton's lively piano playing, however, is better displayed in the informal trio setting of his "Wolverine Blues," recorded at the same session as "The Pearls," in which the *echt*-New Orleans styles of Johnny and Baby Dodds can also be heard to delicious effect.

All nineteen recordings Morton made for Victor in Chicago in 1926 and 1927, including "The Pearls" and "Wolverine Blues," are on *Birth of the Hot* (Bluebird 66641-2).

7. Charleston Chasers
Imagination

The cornetist Red Nichols (1905-65) and the trombonist Miff Mole (1898-1961) led a "New York school" of white jazz musicians whose studio recordings, exactly contemporary with those of Morton's Red Hot Peppers, aspired to the same kind of formal control. Both men were consummate technicians who, like Beiderbecke, were deeply affected by the harmonic language of the French Impressionists. "Imagination," an adventurous composition by the largely forgotten saxophonist-arranger Fud Livingston (1906-57), is typical of their approach.

"Imagination" is on *Lost Chords* (see above under No. 1).

1928

8. Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five
West End Blues

Armstrong, who had recently switched from cornet to the brighter-toned trumpet, joined forces in 1928 with the pianist Earl Hines (1903-83) for a series of recordings in which his solo style reached its early maturity. The grandly proclamatory opening cadenza and efflorescent climactic solo of "West End Blues"—the best-known and most influential recording in the history of jazz—epitomize Armstrong's irreplaceable contribution to the form, as does his wordless, gravel-voiced vocal solo.

Louis Armstrong: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, 1923-1934, Columbia/Legacy's four-disc retrospective of Armstrong's early recordings, is out of print, but can still be found in many record stores and is worth seeking out. *This Is Jazz: Louis Armstrong*, a single-CD anthology drawn from the larger set, contains "West End Blues" and fifteen other key recordings, including "Cornet Chop Suey," "Potato Head Blues," and "Star Dust" (see below under No. 12) (Columbia/ Legacy CK-64613).

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9. Earl Hines
Fifty-Seven Varieties

Simultaneously with the Armstrong Hot Fives, Earl Hines recorded a series of piano solos in which his electrifying playing is given still freer rein. Early jazz piano descended directly from the written-out ragtime of Scott Joplin and his contemporaries; the same "striding" left-hand patterns are present in the playing of such Harlem pianists as James P. Johnson and his pupil Fats Waller. "Fifty-Seven Varieties," a variation on the Original Dixieland Jazz Band's "Tiger Rag," shows how Hines loosened up the stride style, making it more angular and asymmetrical—as well as more explicitly virtuosic.

Piano Man! (ASV CD AJA 5131) contains "Fifty-Seven Varieties" and other piano solos from the 20's and 30's, a few of Hines's later big-band recordings, and several 1928 performances with Armstrong, including the breathtaking "Weather Bird," their only unaccompanied duet recording.

1930

10. Duke Ellington Orchestra
Mood Indigo

The big band of Duke Ellington (1899-1974), which he led for a half-century, was a performing unit of unparalleled originality. The band's idiosyncratic soloists inspired its pianist-leader to write a long series of increasingly complex musical cameos that ultimately won him recognition as jazz's foremost composer. The justly popular "Mood Indigo," co-composed by and featuring the clarinetist Barney Bigard, is a particularly attractive example of the young Ellington's ability to enrich a simple melody with unexpected harmonies and instrumental combinations (in this case, muted solo trumpet and trombone and low-register clarinet).

Beyond Category, an outstanding anthology of performances recorded by Ellington for RCA, contains an early version of "Mood Indigo" (Ellington recorded it many times for many labels), plus 36 other pieces recorded between 1927 and 1967, some composed by or in collaboration with Billy Strayhorn (Buddha 99632-2, two CD's).

1931

11. Casa Loma Orchestra
White Jazz

Paul Whiteman's success inspired hundreds of other musicians to start their own large dance bands, a development that would lead to the emergence of the swing era. The Casa Loma Orchestra, which played the imaginative compositions and arrangements of banjoist Gene Gifford (1908-70) with matchless discipline and verve, was the most successful of the early swing bands, and left its mark on virtually every such group that came afterward. Black and white bands alike were influenced by such Casa Loma recordings as "White Jazz," the first in a series of Gifford originals that also included "Black Jazz" and "Blue Jazz."

"White Jazz" is on *Lost Chords* (see above under No. 1).

12. Louis Armstrong Orchestra
Star Dust

In 1929, Louis Armstrong abandoned the small-group format and spent the next eighteen years playing popular ballads and novelty tunes with big bands of varying musical quality. Though the change brought him mass popularity—including a movie career—it did not in any way represent a diminution of his artistic powers. Armstrong's 1931 recording of Hoagy Carmichael's "Star Dust" reveals that his trumpet playing had grown freer and more expansive, while his singing had gained in emotional directness. If anything, Armstrong was even more influential among his colleagues in the 30's; by the end of the decade, he was universally regarded as the greatest of all jazz musicians.

"Star Dust" is on *This Is Jazz: Louis Armstrong* (see above under No. 9).

1932

13. Billy Banks and His Rhythmmakers
Bugle Call Rag

Armstrong left his mark on innumerable later trumpeters, the best of whom nonetheless forged their own personal styles. Among the best was Henry "Red" Allen (1908-67), whose wonderfully intense playing had a rhythmic flexibility all its own. Allen was among the first black jazz musicians to take part in integrated recording sessions, and his front-line partner on this joyful romp through the jam-session standard "Bugle Call Rag," the clarinetist Pee Wee Russell (1906-69), was an equally distinctive player noteworthy for his Beiderbecke-like harmonic vocabulary and choked, growling tone. Both men were much admired by later jazz modernists, and "Bugle Call Rag," improvised on the spot when a singer failed to show up on time, shows off their respective styles to perfection.

"Bugle Call Rag" is on *Swing Out*, together with other performances recorded by Allen with his own groups and the orchestras of Luis Russell and Fletcher Henderson. Of special interest are the four Henderson sides cut in 1933 and 1934: "King Porter Stomp," "Hocus Pocus," "Down South Camp Meeting," and "Wrappin' It Up." No acceptable single-CD collection of Henderson's best recordings is currently available in this country, but these selections give a clear idea of his prowess as a bandleader and arranger (Topaz Jazz TPZ 1037).

14. Sidney Bechet and His New Orleans Feetwarmers
Maple Leaf Rag

Sidney Bechet returned home from his European travels to form a New

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York-based combo, the New Orleans Feetwarmers, that played in a fervid manner ideally suited to Bechet's own high-voltage style. But audiences of the day were more interested in big bands, and Bechet was temporarily reduced to working as a tailor; it was not until the 40's that a revival of interest in the "New Orleans style" of collective improvisation would restore his fortunes and lead to his being widely acknowledged as a giant of early jazz. Fortunately, the Feetwarmers left behind six 78 sides, including this ferocious performance of Scott Joplin's most celebrated rag, a showcase for Bechet's spectacular playing.

"Maple Leaf Rag" is on *An Introduction to Sidney Bechet: His Best Recordings, 1923-1941* (see above under No. 3).

1933

15. Joe Venuti-Eddie Lang Blue Five
Raggin' the Scale

The violinist Joe Venuti and the guitarist Eddie Lang, the first major jazz musicians to be born outside the United States, were also the first to play jazz on their respective instruments. Between 1927 and Lang's sudden death in 1933, they recorded extensively, both separately and together, working with such noted white musicians as Beiderbecke, Trumbauer, and the members of the Nichols-Mole "New York school"; they also made a large number of small-group sides on their own. Though Venuti's playing was hot and extroverted, such Venuti-Lang recordings as "Raggin' the Scale," most of which also feature the brilliant multi-instrumentalist Adrian Rollini, are best described as chamber jazz, and their sophisticated musical interplay remains fresh to this day.

Stringin' the Blues contains fourteen Venuti-Lang recordings (including "Raggin' the Scale") and eight small-group sides of similar quality cut by the violinist shortly after his partner's death (Topaz Jazz TPZ 1015).

1934

16. Le Quintette du Hot Club de France
Lady Be Good

The first great European jazz soloist did not appear until 1934, when Django Reinhardt (1910-53), a Belgian guitarist of Gypsy parentage, joined forces with the fine French violinist Stephane Grappelli to form a "string band" (violin, three guitars, and bass) known as the Quintet of the Hot Club of France. Reinhardt's rhapsodic yet hard-driving playing, while influenced by the single-string solo style of Eddie Lang, was unconventional to the point of exoticism, inspiring a cultish enthusiasm on the part of his admirers. To this day he remains Europe's preeminent jazzman and, along with Lang and Charlie Christian, one of the key figures of jazz guitar.

The Quintessential Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli contains a generous selection of recordings by the Hot Club Quintet and other groups featuring Reinhardt and Grappelli (ASV Living Era CD AJA 5267).

1936

17. Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra
Organ Grinder's Swing

By the mid-30's, the richly varied orchestrations of such early big-band writers as Challis and Ellington were giving way to a plainer, more direct style, known as "swing," that would give its name to an era. Though swing eventually became rigid and cliché-ridden, its best practitioners knew how to balance rhythmic vitality and textural complexity—and none more so than Sy Oliver, who wrote for the orchestras of Jimmie Lunceford and Tommy Dorsey. In his arrangement of "Organ Grinder's Swing," a novelty tune of 1936, Oliver draws from the Lunceford band a kaleidoscopic range of colors and textures, and the band responds with the irresistibly danceable "two-beat" rhythm that was its trademark.

Eighteen of Lunceford's best recordings, including such Sy Oliver arrangements as "Organ Grinder's Swing," "For Dancers Only," and "Stomp It Off," are on *Swingsation: Jimmie Lunceford* (GRP GRD-9923).

18. Jones-Smith Incorporated
Lady Be Good

Kansas City was the fountainhead of a unique regional style, at once blues-based and lyrical, that would be central to the development of postwar jazz. Its principal exponents were Count Basie (1904-84), whose spare, sparkling piano style set the tone for his incomparable big band, and the tenor saxophonist Lester Young (1909-59), who eschewed the aggressive approach of Coleman Hawkins (1904-69), the first great jazz saxophonist, in favor of a light-footed, harmonically oblique style based on the playing of Beiderbecke and Trumbauer. Young's first recording session produced this classic small-group performance, in which he is backed by the buoyant rhythm-section work of Basie, the bassist Walter Page, and the drummer Jo Jones. Countless jazz musicians have learned his two-chorus solo by heart, and its echoes can be heard in the playing of such later masters of the saxophone as Charlie Parker and Stan Getz.

Lester Leaps In (ASV Living Era CD AJA 5176) contains a balanced assortment of recordings made by Young between 1936 and 1944, including performances by the full Basie band ("Swinging the Blues," "Taxi War Dance") and small groups drawn from its ranks ("Lester Leaps In," "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans"). Coleman Hawkins's early performances of "King Porter Stomp" and "Hocus Pocus" with the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra are on *Swing Out* (see above under No. 13).

1937

19. Red Norvo Orchestra
Remember

Red Norvo (1908-99) was the first musician to play jazz on mallet percussion—the xylophone and, later,

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the vibraharp. His real significance, however, was as a technically impeccable, stylistically forward-looking soloist—he was one of the few jazz musicians prominent in the early 30's who assimilated the later innovations of the beboppers—and as the leader of a subtle big band that whispered and purred at a time when orchestral jazz was inclined to ebullience and extroversion. This suave performance of Irving Berlin's "Remember," which features a deft Norvo solo, was orchestrated by Eddie Sauter (1914-81), whose scores for the bands of Norvo, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, and Ray McKinley placed him among the most advanced jazz composers of the 30's and 40's.

Knockin' on Wood is a wide-ranging collection of 22 big-band and small-group performances recorded by Norvo between 1933 and 1946 (ASV Living Era CD AJA 5341).

20. Benny Goodman Orchestra
Down South Camp Meeting

In 1934, Benny Goodman, a Chicago clarinetist who had moved to New York to play in studio orchestras and on commercial recording dates, started a big band modeled on the Casa Loma Orchestra. He began purchasing the simple yet swinging arrangements of Fletcher Henderson (some of which had previously been recorded by the Henderson band), and hired such crack players as the trumpeters Bunny Berigan and Harry James, the pianists Jess Stacy and Teddy Wilson, and the drummer Gene Krupa. Goodman's own playing was notable for its rhythmic drive and exceptional technical finish, and his meticulously rehearsed band soon became one of the finest large ensembles in jazz, playing such numbers as "Down South Camp Meeting" with a fire and precision unmatched in Henderson's own undisciplined versions. By the end of 1935, the Goodman band had scored a huge success among American teenagers, thereby ushering in the swing era.

Benny Goodman: On the Air (1937-38) contains thrilling live performances of many well-remembered items from the repertoire of the Goodman band, including "Down South Camp Meeting," "King Porter Stomp," "Sometimes I'm Happy," "Bugle Call Rag," and an incendiary version of Mary Lou Williams's "Roll 'Em" recorded just two weeks before Gene Krupa, disillusioned by Goodman's famously peculiar behavior, left to start his own band. Also included are several excellent numbers by the Goodman Trio and Quartet, the first racially integrated jazz group to perform in public, featuring Wilson on piano, Lionel Hampton on vibraphone, and Krupa or Dave Tough on drums (Columbia/Legacy C2K-48836, two CD's). Fletcher Henderson's 1934 recording of "Down South Camp Meeting" is on *Swing Out* (see above under No. 13).

To be continued

All of the CD's mentioned in this piece can be purchased online at www.commentarymagazine.com.

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ART

The Eye of Alfred Stieglitz

Steven C. Munson

THE REISSUING of *Alfred Stieglitz: Photographs and Writings** by the National Gallery of Art is the beginning of a multiyear, multimedia retrospective of the photographer's life and art. It is also an occasion for celebration. For many years out of print, this book contains reproductions of some of the photographer's finest pictures, excerpts from his articles on photography and from his letters that give a full and vivid sense of both his artistic sensibility and his uncompromising personality, and an illuminating essay by the volume's editor, Sarah Greenough, curator of the 1983 exhibition for which the book was originally published.

At $75, *Alfred Stieglitz: Photographs and Writings* is within the normal price range of quality art books, but what you get is worth far more than that. For, in addition to reprints of some of the most beautiful and penetrating photographs taken in the 20th century, it offers a clear understanding of the nature and purposes of modern art and of the kind of highly personal struggle involved in its creation.

For Alfred Stieglitz, that struggle initially sprang from a scientific interest in the workings, materials, and products of what was then still a new instrument, the camera. Born in Hoboken, New Jersey, on New Year's Day, 1864, Stieglitz moved with his family to New York City when he was seven. In 1881, after two years at City College, he moved with his family again, this time to Germany. From 1882 to 1886, he attended the *Technische Hochshule* in Berlin as a mechanical-engineering student and studied with Hermann Wilhelm Vogel, a major innovator in the development of photographic processes. And he began to take pictures.

Over the next several decades, both in the United States and in Europe, Stieglitz wrote about photography, translated books about photography, exhibited his own pictures, and arranged exhibitions of the pictures of others. From 1897 to 1902, he edited *Camera Notes*, the journal of the Camera Club of New York. Later, he would carry forth his ideas in his own publication, *Camera Work*, which he edited from 1903 to 1917. Stieglitz also organized the Photo-Secession, a group dedicated to the proposition that the camera could indeed be a new medium of art; but by 1910 he rejected their approach as a failed effort to imitate certain backward-looking styles of painting rather than a serious attempt to pursue the uniquely expressive possibilities of photography as a genuinely modern art form.

This repudiation was a result of his trips to Europe, where he was exposed to the works of Cézanne, Rodin, Matisse, Picasso, Braque, and other modern artists. The impact of these encounters was decisive. Previously, many of Stieglitz's pictures—notably, his portraits of European laborers, peasants, and street characters—were the result of a somewhat artificial search for the picturesque. But under the influence of European modernism, he consciously turned his art in a new direction.

Even before the turn of the century, there were indications in his work of what would later become his

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true aesthetic preoccupations. In such highly evocative photographs as *Sun Rays—Paula, Berlin* (1889), *Early Morn* (1894), and *Sunlight Effect, Gutach* (1894), Stieglitz's main concern was with exploring the effects of light, much as the Impressionists had done in painting. In these pictures, the "subject"—a woman in a sitting room, workers in the field, a woman at a well—loses its intrinsic importance and becomes an occasion for capturing certain qualities of light or times of day or atmospheric conditions, and for giving expression to the sensations or feelings they arouse in the artist.

IN THESE early pictures, something else is apparent as well: Stieglitz's gift for composition. *A Street in Sterzing, the Tyrol* (1890), with its jutting roofs and walls and sharply angled areas of dark and light, contains an incipient abstract pattern. Though not as successfully realized, *A Street in Bellagio* (1894) likewise hints at modernism, its image of upwardly receding steps bringing to mind one of Klee's brilliantly patterned abstractions, *Highways and Byways* (1929). And in *Spring Showers—The Street Sweeper* (1901), the uniform misty gray of the sky and street and the spareness of the scene (the vertical photograph is dominated by a nearly leafless tree and its reflection on a rain-soaked New York City sidewalk) evoke the flattened imagery of Japanese art, which had a major impact on late-19th-century painters.

Although this last picture captures a particular incident in a particular place and under very particular conditions, it has a certain timeless quality, a quality one also finds in *At Biarritz* (1890). But the latter—in its calculated horizontal arrangement of people, chairs, and umbrellas along a beach—foreshadows an even more ambitious aesthetic goal: the production of photographs whose image-structure is fully analogous to that of modernist painting.

The critical element here, which would soon become the driving force of Stieglitz's art, is the budding priority given to the creation of a visual design. As Greenough writes, with reference to his pictures of skyscrapers, airplanes, and ocean liners,

> It is not only their subject matter which is strikingly modern . . . but also their style. A dominant concern for atmosphere—the most prized element of pictorial photography [up until then]—was eliminated. Instead . . . Stieglitz expressed a strong interest in formal concerns. As in his photograph of *The Steerage*, . . . these works are constructed around relationships of shapes.

Nowhere is this more evident than in such works as *The City Across the River* (1910) and *Untitled—The Ferry Boat* (1910?), in which irregular clusters of repeated forms—in the former, a group of short thick pilings bunched together; in the latter, a dense crowd of men wearing straw hats—create a source of concentrated movement that grabs the viewer's eye even as it seeks to follow the repetition and contrast of larger forms that complete the composition. One finds the same sort of compositional genius at work in *Dancing Trees* (1922), in which a section of closely packed trunks and branches pushes out in all directions, their frozen undulations animated by an infinitely repeated pattern of white flecks on the dark bark.

IN SUCH pictures, the power and energy of urban life or the remarkable beauty and order found in nature are not illustrated, or even represented, but rather are conveyed through a carefully composed abstraction of the essence of an experience. Put another way, many of Stieglitz's post-1910 images, though representational, should not be considered pictures of things but aesthetic objects whose logic and impact derive above all from their formal structure.

This can be clearly seen in photographs where Stieglitz uses only a fragment of the human form, such as *Georgia O'Keeffe* (1921), which shows a woman's hands, fingers spread apart, holding a bunch of grapes against a large leaf whose folds echo the forms created by the separated fingers. It can be seen, to delightful effect, in such works as *Little House* (1934?), whose juxtaposed elements—a tiny moon in the sky, a weathervane, a tall post—and contrasting lines—of the horizon, the roof, the shadow of an awning—suggest the abstractions of Miró. And it can be seen as well in the numerous photographs Stieglitz made of New York City buildings—such as *From an American Place, Southwest* (1932)—which make powerful use of the innovations of Cubism.

The process of creating such photographs required not only a painstakingly sensitive adjustment of tones but a cropping of the image that demanded sustained efforts of analysis and imagination. Just how difficult the activity was is worth pondering, particularly in light of the relative ease with which almost anyone, even 100 years ago, could pick up a camera and take a decent picture. As Stieglitz himself wrote in an 1897 article entitled, "The Hand Camera—Its Present Importance":

> It was, undoubtedly, due to the hand camera that photography became so generally popular a few years ago. Every Tom, Dick, and Harry could, without trouble, learn how to get something or other on a sensitive plate, and this is what the public wanted—no work and lots of fun. Thanks to the efforts of these persons, hand camera and bad work became synonymous. The climax was reached when an enterprising firm flooded the market with a very ingenious hand camera and the announcement, "You press the button, and we do the rest."

When it came to photographs, his own or others', Stieglitz's stan-

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dards were high and clear, and he was utterly frank about them. As he wrote in 1917 to a photographic artist who had submitted her prints for his consideration:

> Your new work is finer than your old. There is development. . . . [But the] Little Gallery . . . is devoted to ideas. To the development of such. And I feel that your work, good as it is, is primarily picture-making. This is not adding to the idea of photography, nor to the idea of expression.

SUCH SERIOUSNESS was the hallmark of Stieglitz's life and work. It is also the single most important quality missing from the current art scene, where self-indulgence of one sort or another often seems to be both the main source of inspiration and the surest path to fame and fortune. This has been the case with many celebrated artists, including one whose stylized photographs of herself in various costumes and poses amount to little more than camp versions of a little girl playing dress-up, and another who has produced a series of color photographs of himself engaged in sex acts with his wife, a former Italian porn star.

In a cultural climate where products like these are deemed art, it will hardly come as a shock to hear that the pivotal work of a man like Alfred Stieglitz is no longer valued as highly as it once was, even by those whose proper job it is, or should be, to exercise careful critical judgment and to correct popular taste. Thus, in reviewing *Alfred Stieglitz: Photographs and Writings* for the *New York Review of Books*, John Updike wrote that today,

> The German-educated native of Hoboken, once such a vital rabble-rouser in the retarded American artistic scene, is remembered through the mist of battles long won or, what comes in the heartless long view to the same thing, battles hardly worth fighting.

This frank dismissal of the importance of Stieglitz's struggle to advance the cause of modern art—Matisse, Picasso, and others were first shown in America at his "291" gallery in New York—is accompanied by an equally frank dismissal of his highly abstract and quite remarkable *Cloud* series, of which Updike writes, "These prints made a stir in their time and satisfied Stieglitz's passion for an idea, but they don't, I confess, do much for me." Updike concludes his denigration of Stieglitz's achievements by crediting the photographer's mistress and later wife, Georgia O'Keeffe, not only with turning "him back into an artist for a time" but with sustaining "with indelible, determinedly personal images the spirit of Stieglitz's galleries."

Such assertions cannot withstand serious scrutiny—the *Cloud* series, for example, suggests that Stieglitz's evolution as a photographer had something in common with that of Monet's as a painter—but they are actually not Updike's real point. For what seems to have impressed him the most about what he calls O'Keeffe's "pictorial ideas" is that "they have achieved a popular currency to a degree matched by few of her generation male or female." The only response one can make to this level of criticism is to point out that in the case at hand, expressing a preference for O'Keeffe over Stieglitz is a little like saying that you prefer a greeting card to the Gettysburg Address.

Whatever else it represents, such determined middlebrowism is a clear manifestation of our current cultural malaise. The fact is that more than a few critics these days seem, as Updike does, bored with, or exhausted by, the demands of any serious effort to renew appreciation of artists of Stieglitz's caliber. But this failure says more about them, and about us, than it does about the value or the importance of the great figures of 20th-century art.

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Books in Review

Home Alone

Ready or Not: Why Treating Children as Small Adults Endangers their Future—and Ours
by Kay S. Hymowitz
Free Press. 292 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Mary Eberstadt

FOR WHATEVER reason, the murders in Littleton, Colorado, last April by the teenage killers Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris loosed a tide of public commentary unmatched in the recent history of such crimes. Just about everyone, it appeared, had something to say about what had happened at Columbine High—from a debate in the *New York Times* about whether high schools as we know them may be obsolete, to *Time* magazine's chart comparing the medication profiles of Klebold and Harris with those of assailants in similar killings, to the *Weekly Standard*'s poignant article about young Cassie Bernall, who died professing her Christian faith (and whose life story, coincidentally, is just out in book form). And though the quality of what was said varied widely, the level of seriousness was unusually high. The murders in Littleton, almost everyone seemed to agree, meant that something, somehow, had gone terribly wrong out there in the America where children were growing up.

It is a pity that all those commentators could not have availed themselves of Kay Hymowitz's excellent new book. For in dealing with the way children and adolescents are treated in society today, *Ready or Not* drives boldly into territory only skirted last spring. This is a book rich in implication not only for the sociology of certain teenage suburban savages but for any understanding of the ideas that will influence the course of almost every American child's life.

Ready or Not tells the profoundly disturbing story of how ostensibly disparate theories of children and child development—theories emanating from the academic realms of psychology, education, and legal philosophy, then translated with signature vulgarity into the popular culture—have come to operate as a web of excuses for what amounts to a pervasive pattern of indifference and neglect. Hymowitz, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, opens by observing the changes in our "contemporary social environment" that have rendered children an "endangered species." This territory, as she acknowledges, has been charted by others, particularly the sociologist David Elkind in his classic book, *The Hurried Child* (1981). But where Elkind drew attention to the unique stresses imposed on children by certain postmodern phenomena, including the "decline of traditional domestic arrangements," the "demands of a meritocratic society," the "growing presence of a hypersexualized media," and so forth, Hymowitz goes further. The diminution of American childhood, she argues, has been caused not only by such impersonal social forces but also by the conscious, at times in-

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tensely personal, "ideas and actions of those who help shape our understanding of children."

Fundamental to these ideas and actions, she finds, is the notion of "children as capable, rational, and autonomous beings." This notion, which she dubs "anticulturalism," has as its Siamese twin the idea that adults themselves, deprived or relieved of the task of acculturating the young, can now safely be demoted to the status of "personal trainers or mere companions." Both sides of this anticultural idea, as *Ready or Not* demonstrates, have had tragic consequences for the children nurtured—or more accurately, refused nurture—under its influence.

Consider, writes Hymowitz, the field of education. For almost a century now, under the influence of John Dewey and his followers, American classrooms have been the training ground for progressive experimentation in all its related varieties: "discovery learning," "constructivism," "lifelong learning," "child-centered curriculum," "whole-language philosophy," "natural math," and the rest. All these experiments, Hymowitz observes, "begin by assuming the existence of a rational, organized, and self-directed youngster," while simultaneously denying what she calls the "less obliging side" of children, meaning their "restlessness, impulsiveness, preference for the easy way out."

Generations of children have suffered from this disjuncture between what educational theory holds them to be and what they actually are. There is, to begin with, the by-now familiar fact that American students lag behind their foreign peers on almost every reliable measure of performance. But even more telling is that our children do not appear to be enjoying their self-direction very much. For all the appeals to their "innate interests" and "natural love of learning," few if any students are able, in the absence of real adult guidance, to live up to the educators' imaginings. To the contrary: "student apathy and restlessness," Hymowitz reports, "are the most common complaints among teachers today."

Related to this are the costs of ignoring the darker side of children's—which is to say, human—nature. Where once a struggling student was expected to call forth a teacher's pedagogical ingenuity, the onus today is placed elsewhere, often on psychotropic drugs. Similarly, the stunning rise in classroom violence—which has increased directly alongside the proliferation of student-centered activities and the relegating of adults to the sidelines—can be seen as one more illustration of what happens when children and teenagers are understood to stand in need of no particular protection.

ANTICULTURAL IDEAS saturate the realm of contemporary psychology as well. Beginning with Piaget, Hymowitz notes, experts uncovered surprising information about just how much toddlers and infants were really capable of. Confronted with such findings, they then deemphasized what was also true and had long been recognized: the vulnerability, unique by mammalian standards, of the human infant. Wishful thinking, here as elsewhere, played its own part. By the mid-70's, according to *Ready or Not*, "scientists were ready to overthrow entirely the traditional picture of the helpless infant."

Following the emphasis of the psychologists, child-care experts, too, have stressed how much babies or toddlers "know." Benjamin Spock, T. Berry Brazelton, and Penelope Leach "evoke a lucid, independent, and self-regulating baby"—and one who does not grow any less autonomous as he graduates to childhood. In the several day-care abuse trials of the 1980's, Hymowitz notes, "social workers, parents, lawyers, and judges were duped by a particular form of the anticultural fallacy" into assuming that even very young children "already have a firm grip on an independent reality."

Similarly with the law, where the pressure to endow children with the same rights as adults, detailed in one of this book's most absorbing chapters, grows apace. One source of that pressure is assuredly its political appeal to certain constituencies, among them the partisans of legalized abortion for teenagers. Hymowitz quotes from an amicus brief filed in a parent-notification case: "There is no factual justification for treating fourteen-year-old women [*sic*] differently, in this regard, from eighteen-year-old women." From this concept of "fourteen-year-old women," as Hymowitz suggests, it is but a short slide down an ever-steepening legal slope.

THERE IS much more in this book about anticulturalism in all its coarse varieties, from the "family-rot" genre that envelops television shows like *South Park* and *The Simpsons*, to the *Home Alone* movies, and to the much lamented commercial exploitation of even the youngest children. "Yesterday's parent-controlled childhood," Hymowitz aptly summarizes, "protected children not only from sex, from work, and from adult decisions; it also protected them from the dominance of peers and from the market with all its pressure."

But *Ready or Not* also closes on a note of measured optimism. Messages from the "anticultural wilderness"—Hymowitz has in mind such books as Elizabeth Wurtzel's *Prozac Nation*, Mayra Hornbacher's *Wasted*, and Wendy Shalit's *A Return to Modesty*—have shown the darker side of anticultural child-rearing to the thinking public. And then, too, the fact remains that, as she puts it, "human nature can only be stretched so far."

This is a plausible line of argument, and one that is reminiscent of Francis Fukuyama's analysis of the continuing "renorming of society" in his latest book, *The Great Dis-*

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ruption. But, as the author of *Ready or Not* knows better than most, planting our faith in human nature can also be a risky and sometimes self-deluding business. Limits to human nature are one thing; how far we can stretch before reaching those limits is another.

Forty years ago, most Americans would surely have never believed that in the not-so-distant future, the *majority* of mothers with babies and preschool children would end up parting company with those children for many or most of their waking hours, and that many of these same mothers would also insist that the separation itself was positively good for their child. Forty years ago, it seems safe to guess, people would not only have had trouble believing that such things could come to pass, they would have been astounded to learn that this massive separation of mothers and their young would coincide with the most prosperous era in American (or, for that matter, world) history.

Yes, some mothers are forced to leave newborns in order to work. But many, many others are not so compelled. Their freely chosen maternal absenteeism is something new. It is conscious, counterintuitive, learned—and the adroitness with which it has been learned should make us pause before assuming that "human nature," at least in this area, will reassert itself *en masse* any time soon.

In fact, this very experiment in mother-child separation—perhaps, as hindsight may prove, the most important domestic experiment of our time—is what binds together all the disparate strands of Hymowitz's important and sorry tale. For although serious people from many different walks of life have contributed to the myth of the autonomous, independent, rational child, the principal agent of that myth, in which so many millions of parents have apparently needed to believe, has been the American feminist movement. In general, Hymowitz is oddly lenient toward this movement, noting merely that "for obvious reasons, feminists were especially prone" to the shrinking of American childhood. But the truth is not so nuanced.

It was feminism, more than any other single force, that contrived the abstractions that even now cloud what anyone can grasp with his unaided senses: that babies and young children are fragile, irrational creatures who need their parents, and most especially their mothers, because their happiness demands it (and not merely because neglecting them may affect their future brains or career prospects). It was feminism that, one bit of polemic at a time, diminished the rewards of American motherhood and hardened the hearts of American mothers; the undoing of what it has thereby wrought will be the work of generations.

Still, though *Ready or Not* may pull this final punch, it succeeds in delivering blow after blow to the ideas that have warped the American perception of what children, as such, really are about. This is a book not only for parents but for every psychologist who has pondered the skyrocketing rates of disorder in prepubescent children, every teacher and principal and school-board member who has lost sleep over the vulgarity and violence in even the best public schools, every doctor concerned with teenage medical plagues from eating disorders to STD's. But perhaps *Ready or Not* should be reserved especially for all those angry and defensive souls, most of them female, who let fly with letters to the editor whenever anyone dares to wonder how it ever came to pass that so many American children—figuratively and often literally—have ended up home alone. They should read it and weep.

The Long Prelude

A People Apart: The Jews in Europe, 1789-1939
by David Vital
Oxford. 944 pp. $45.00

Reviewed by
Robert S. Wistrich

THIS MASSIVE, densely argued book starkly recounts the successive political crises that engulfed the Jews of Europe from the French Revolution until the Holocaust. David Vital, a distinguished Israeli scholar and historian of Zionism, is by no means the first to attempt this daunting task. But he brings to it many of the qualities that marked his earlier works, including a certain *gravitas*, sound judgment, and a solid documentary foundation in all the salient languages. And he also brings his customary, unabashedly political focus on the events he narrates. For Vital, it is power relations that always provide the ultimate determinants of the Jewish situation in history.

AT THE center of Vital's narrative lies, appropriately enough, Russo-Polish Jewry: a community whose sheer numbers (over five million in 1900), cohesion, and compactness made it "much more distinctively and unselfconsciously a people apart than their brethren elsewhere." The majority of these Jews were Yiddish-speaking, many of them also reading and writing Hebrew. More traditionally observant than their Western co-religionists, and also more obviously "alien," they could hardly be assimilated into the ruling ethos of imperial Russia—a heavy-handed police state that in-

ROBERT S. WISTRICH *holds the Neuberger chair in modern Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His books include* Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism, and Xenophobia *and* Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred.

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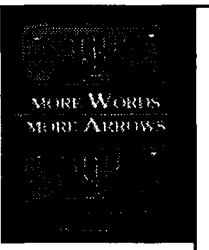

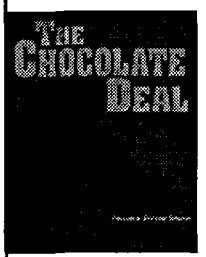

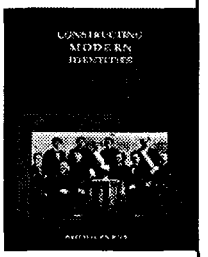

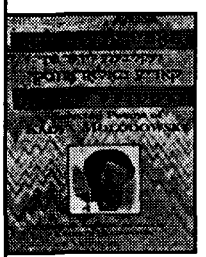
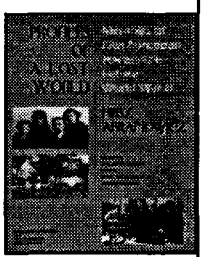

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transigently proclaimed its autocratic absolutism as well as its Christian Orthodox and ethnic Russian character. After 1881, and especially during the early 20th century, when anti-Jewish mob violence exploded in Russia, the czarist state tended to blame the Jews themselves for the aggressions against them, and tightened the noose still further. Already confined mainly to the Pale of Settlement, they became burdened by no fewer than 650 restrictive laws.

From the late 19th century on, Russian Jews responded to their oppression in an increasingly secular, activist, and militant fashion. Some joined distinctly Jewish revolutionary movements like the Bund, which tried to combine class struggle and devotion to the Yiddish language with demands for cultural-national autonomy. Others sought a solution in Palestine through Zionism, or advocated Jewish nationalism in the Diaspora—subjects that Vital has written about extensively in earlier works. Still others, retaining their allegiance to tradition, organized themselves into separatist religious-political groupings like the Aguda. And, between 1881 and 1914, over two-and-a-half million Jews responded to their dismal economic situation and to anti-Semitic persecution by fleeing Russia and Eastern Europe altogether, the largest number settling in the United States.

IF VITAL'S major focus is on Russia (and Poland) before the Bolshevik Revolution, he also devotes considerable space to Polish Jewry between the two world wars, as well as to the Jews of Germany from the late 18th century to 1939. In the Polish Republic after 1918, Jews remained a nationally conscious and self-assertive community but also one torn apart by endemic divisions and fractiousness. In the meantime, Polish anti-Semitism—whether Catholic, nationalist, or openly fascist—grew increasingly intense, making the Jewish position by the 1930's extremely vulnerable. Not only did the powerful National Democratic opposition party agitate for the "evacuation" of Poland's 3.2 million Jews, but after 1935 the Polish government itself actively encouraged emigration and began to undermine established Jewish rights.

In the case of German Jewry, Vital draws a number of interesting contrasts with Russia and Poland. He emphasizes, for example, the passionate identification of German Jews with their fatherland; their refusal to form Jewish political parties; and their relegation of Jewish identity to the private domain. And yet, even though, by the turn of the century, German Jews had become a prosperous, solidly acculturated, and well-educated urban element, they remained "second-class citizens" when it came to holding positions in the state bureaucracy, the judiciary, the universities, or the armed forces; their existence was clouded, moreover, by the rise of political anti-Semitism in Germany after 1880.

Although he has surprisingly little to say about the Weimar Republic, Vital does point to the differences between German anti-Semitism—in his view, it was decidedly an "artificial and invented matter" both before and after Hitler's coming to power—and the situation in czarist Russia and interwar Poland, where the "Jewish question" had a partly "objective" core rooted in the ethnic character and size of the Jewish communities. In the end, of course, these differences availed little or nothing at all.

Finally, Vital deals competently with the evolution of French Jews from 1789 to the Dreyfus Affair (thereafter, their story seems to fade from view), and more ephemerally with Anglo-Jewry. But there are only sporadic references in *A People*

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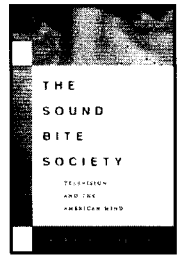

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Apart to the interesting and significant communities of Austria, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic States, and, in the West, Holland and Italy. This is a pity, since giving them serious consideration would have not only provided a more faithful and varied picture of European Jewry but also brought more clearly into the foreground those elements of (partially) successful social integration and creative achievement which unfortunately make but rare appearances in the narrative.

Vital's approach to the writing of history has both strengths and drawbacks. The strengths are predominantly on view in his exhaustive analysis of the tensions between the Jews and their Gentile rulers. His early chapters show with particular clarity how, under "enlightened absolutism," the European states with which he is most concerned sought to make the Jews more productive and useful to their purposes by exercising greater governmental supervision and social control from above—an experiment that everywhere led to disaster. In Germany, both the state and "civil society" found it difficult to accept Jews as equals, while in Russia, where popular forces remained deeply hostile to the Jews, the government could hardly be relied upon to guarantee their safety and indeed became actively complicit in their persecution. The same was true, if in a much milder form, in Poland after World War I, despite the fact that Jews there enjoyed formal equality.

In short, what Vital is able to bring home with force is how, between 1789 and 1939, the European state was gradually transformed from a protector of the Jews (if at times a grudging and unreliable one) into their primary enemy. This was most obvious in Hitler's Germany after 1933, but to a lesser degree the same held true for Romania, Hungary, Poland, and other parts of Eastern Europe. (In the more liberal societies of the West like France and Great Britain, of course, the process of modernization was achieved with much less friction and much greater efficacy.)

In his closing chapters, Vital vividly conveys what happened when the Jews, having by now thoroughly lost the protection of their own governments, were abandoned to the tender mercies of the "international community." The Evian Conference of 1938, in which delegates from 32 countries failed even to discuss the causes of European Jewish distress, let alone publicly to criticize Nazi Germany, epitomized the inability or unwillingness of Western governments to do anything concrete to aid Jewish refugees. Although few if any of the details in Vital's account of this disgrace are new, he does communicate something of the asphyxiating atmosphere that enveloped European Jews by the late 1930's, and that was exacerbated by the stony refusal of the British Mandatory authorities in Palestine to grant unimpeded entry to the Jewish National Home.

But there are also serious drawbacks to Vital's narrowly political interpretation of modern Jewish history. In my view, one cannot convincingly analyze the relationship of the European state to the Jewish community without seriously considering the social, economic, cultural, and ideological contexts in which this relationship occurred. Vital himself seems at times to realize as much—when, for instance, he discusses the role of the Jewish religious tradition, the financial services that Jewish notables provided for absolutist rulers, or the demographic evolution of individual Jewish communities. But only sporadically, if at all, does he deal with the story of Jewish economic success,

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with the issues of social integration and exclusion, or with the stupendous cultural achievements as well as the fractured identities of many assimilated European Jews.

Thus, the reader will seek in vain in these pages for allusions to such shapers of modern culture as Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Henri Bergson, Franz Kafka, Karl Kraus, Joseph Roth, Isaac Babel, Gustav Mahler, or Arnold Schoenberg, let alone to intellectual giants of Jewish thought like Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, or Franz Rozenzweig. Nor is there much to be learned here about Jewish participation in the liberal, democratic, socialist, or Communist movements in Europe, despite their relevance to public perceptions of Jewry. Moreover, the near-silence Vital maintains on the subject of Austria-Hungary leads to a neglect of its anti-Semitic movements, including that of Karl Lueger—the notorious mayor of Vienna at the turn of the century and the first anti-Semitic figure to achieve major political success in a democratic election.

Other distortions creep in as well. When it comes to German Jews, Vital exaggerates the elements of passivity and disintegration in this community, ignoring its resilience, intellectual vitality, and courage in the face of unprecedented adversity. And in his own field of unquestioned expertise—the history of Zionism—although he recapitulates Herzl's political brand of Zionism in detail, he virtually ignores the "cultural Zionism" associated with the name of Ahad Ha-Am. Finally, in a book devoting hundreds of pages to Russia, Vital omits any inquiry into the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* or into the myth of "Judeo-Communism" that was to have such a fateful influence in the inter-war period on the destiny of European Jewry.

Such, at any rate, are a few of the flaws and omissions that seem to flow ineluctably from the single-minded emphasis on power relations in describing and interpreting the history of the Jews. And yet it must also be said that, at times, this same lens focuses on reality with particular sharpness. Vital's final chapter provides an especially compelling picture of a European Jewry emasculated politically and crushed physically by 1939. Virtually abandoned by the states on which they had hung all their hopes for prosperity and progress since the Enlightenment, they had become indeed a "people apart," tragically superfluous and of no political consequence. A deadly trap was about to descend on them.

Sincerity 101

For Common Things: Irony, Trust, and Commitment in America Today
by Jedediah Purdy
Knopf. 226 pp. $20.00

Reviewed by
Wilfred M. McClay

JEDEDIAH PURDY's book is one of the minor sensations of the publishing season, a fact owing in no small part to the attention lavished on it and its author by the *New York Times Magazine* and other elite media organs. A meditation on the current ills of our national character and public life, it is the latest installment in the long American tradition of the jeremiad. Yet there are many other books working the same territory and making the same appeals. What is it about this one that has attracted so much attention?

The answer, of course, is that Jedediah Purdy is no ordinary brooding public intellectual. To the contrary, he is an attractive, high-minded, and immensely earnest twenty-four-year-old *wunderkind*. Homeschooled in rural West Virginia by his ex-hippie parents, he went on to scale the academic heights of Exeter, Harvard College, and Yale Law School, and he has evidently come through it all without succumbing to the fashionable disillusionment and world-weary jadedness of his peers. Jedediah Purdy, his publicists would have us believe, is a moral exemplar for his own generation and a sorely needed preceptor for the rest of us. Unfortunately, this is a burden that his youthful shoulders cannot begin to bear.

For Common Things is by no means a rigorously argued book—much of it consists of autobiographical reflections—but Purdy does try to sum up what he sees as our national predicament. Today's America, he contends, is permeated by an ironic sensibility, embodied for him in the wildly successful television show *Seinfeld*. Faintly amused by or contemptuous of every serious thing, people who share this destructive attitude close themselves off from the most elevating passions, from wonder, surprise, awe, and outrage. They prefer a life lived provisionally—a life enclosed, so to speak, within quotation marks.

Worse, by Purdy's lights, the ascendance of irony has proved deadly to our public life. It feeds the impoverished view that politics is an inherently disreputable and corrupt activity, and that there are no common purposes worth sacrificing for—indeed, that there is nothing beyond the individual. The result, he laments, has been the loss of a genuine public sphere and the reduction of politics to an ugly contest of who gets what, developments that reinforce each other in a deepening cycle.

In Purdy's view, however, the ironic sensibility is built upon an illusion. It ignores the inherent limitations of individuals and their rad-

WILFRED M. MCCLAY *holds the SunTrust chair in humanities at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.*

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ical dependency on one another. For Purdy, this need for mutual support is visible in a triad of successively expanding "ecological" networks: the moral ecology of family and friends, the social ecology of civic life, and the natural ecology of the physical environment—all of which he illustrates with examples drawn from his own idyllic upbringing.

By learning once again to "pay attention" to this vast web of interrelationships, Purdy concludes, we can be lifted above our mere "quantum selves," finding joy and fulfillment in a restored and genuinely public existence—a term that, for him, points to the cultivation and improvement of "the commons," the world we all share.

Needless to say, Jedediah Purdy's themes are not exactly new. In fact, they are among the most venerable in the history of Western thought and sentiment. Man is by nature a political animal. No man is an island. Who gains his life loses it, and who loses his life gains it. And so on.

But it is one thing to invoke such worthy themes and quite another to apply them with any sophistication to the complex reality of one's own day. Purdy's pretensions and weaknesses are precisely the characteristic failings of a bookish young person whose reach exceeds his grasp. He has thought a lot about the things he has experienced—indeed, he intellectualizes everything around him—but he has as yet experienced very little.

Purdy is no doubt right to fault his classmates for failing to take seriously their emotions and commitments, their *lives* in the broadest sense. As he points out—in one of the book's few genuine insights—great fearfulness and self-distrust lurk behind this façade of insouciance. Still, consequential though these corrosive attitudes may be, students from the elite schools that Jedediah Purdy has attended are hardly representative of the American mind.

What, then, explains the seemingly undeniable fact that public life has deteriorated in contemporary America? Well, one can think of lots of things beyond the decision of Harvard graduates to "opt out" of public concerns (a phenomenon—if in fact it exists—that one might be mischievously tempted to describe as a net *gain* for American public life). Purdy might have considered, for instance, the imposition of a range of controversial liberal policies through the courts and regulatory agencies rather than through democratic elections; the "culture wars" that have arisen in the wake of such advances, making it virtually impossible to agree on those things that compose our "commons"; and the reign of politically-correct speech, which has done so much to sap the vitality and honesty of public discourse. As for overcoming cur-

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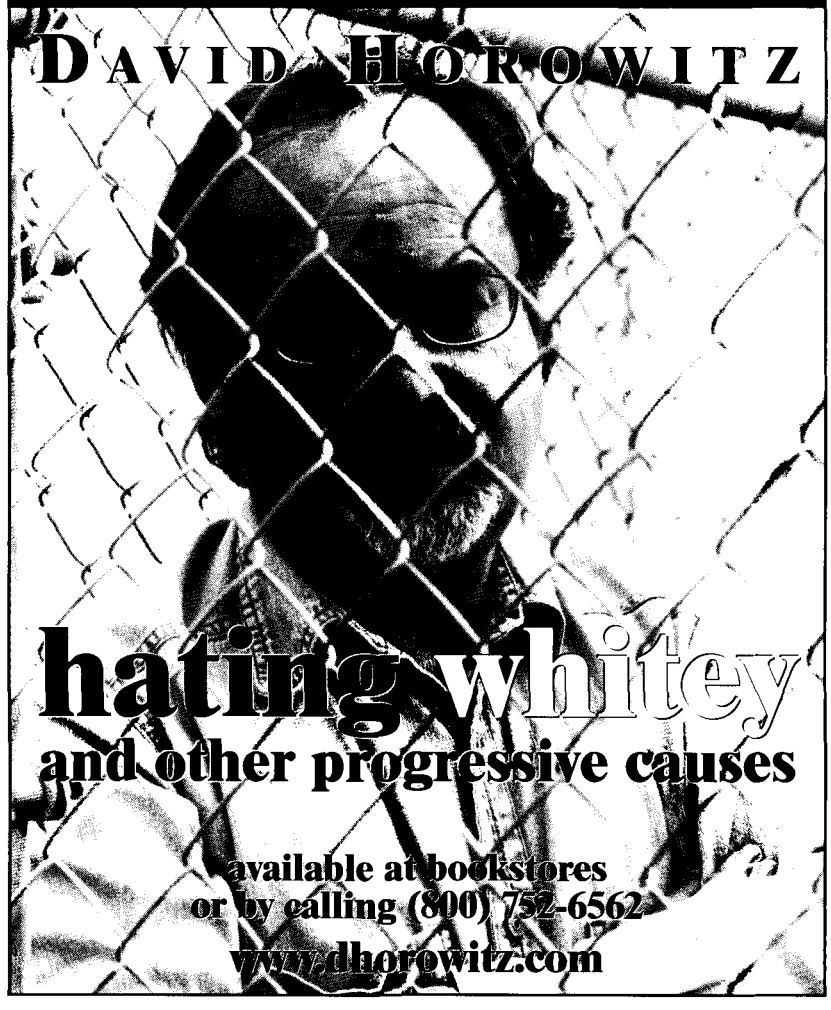

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rent public apathy, one might have expected Purdy to give serious consideration to, say, devolving governmental decision-making to the local level, where responsible citizenship can be more readily exercised.

But Purdy evidently has not given much thought to any of these things—or if he has, is unwilling to depart from the conventional liberal wisdom that is as much a part of the social and educational environment in which he has spent the last several years as the ironic detachment that he so passionately decries. In the end, his moral exhortations amount to little more than nebulous uplift of a rather familiar political variety.

AT THE same time—and this bears emphasis—it would be a mistake to make too much of *For Common Things*. Lord knows, Jedediah Purdy certainly wants to be taken seriously, but it is impossible in reading his book not to be reminded again and again that one is in the presence of a very young man and intellectually a very immature one.

There are the expected sorts of errors: attributing quotations to Thoreau that really belong to Emerson, providing a mistaken etymology for the word "public," etc. Then there is the writing style—self-importantly academic and abstract, bordering at times on malapropism. "Emotions," Purdy opines in a typically overfreighted sentence, "have attracted relentless and often vapid attention in recent decades, abetted by the confessional culture of talk shows and choreographed political repentance that makes such concern unabashedly public." Finally, there is the humorless earnestness of this apostle of "the reality of things," with his implicit judgment that all who do not share his sentiments are guilty of bad faith or "inattention."

Having taught a number of bright students very much like Purdy, I could not shake the intuition that what I was reading was a revised and expanded version of an undergraduate thesis. I have no idea whether there is any basis for that feeling, but if Jedediah Purdy had been my student, I hope I would have cared enough about him to say, "Don't publish this." Clearly, those in a position to give Purdy such advice refrained from doing so.

But then again, the actual contents of *For Common Things* have much less to do with the noise it is making than the carefully created persona surrounding its author. If we did not know who Jedediah Purdy is—an improbable combination of Appalachian authenticity and Harvard-Yard smarts—we would read his words very differently, if at all. Is there not wonderful *irony* in the fact that a book disparaging the world of false surfaces and advocating a life of simplicity and candor should rely so heavily for its appeal on the most obvious sort of image-mongering?

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Reviewed by
Mark Falcoff

BEFORE HIS death in 1997 at the age of seventy, François Furet was director of studies at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Paris, a recently-elected member of the "40 immortals" of the French Academy, and one of France's leading historians of the revolution of 1789—not precisely a field lacking in competition. Born in 1927, Furet, like many French intellectuals of his generation, had passed through the Communist party before moving on to more liberal political sentiments; unlike many of them, however, he explicitly thought through the historical circumstances that had led to his own attraction to the Marxist faith. The result is this remarkable book.

A stimulating and challenging work, *The Passing of an Illusion* is nonetheless difficult to summarize. On one level it is a history of the Communist idea as that idea made its way from the French to the Russian revolutions, and from there into the heart of European culture and thought, before finally spreading to the most ragged edges of Western civilization and to those unfortunate areas that used to be called the third world. On another, it is a political history of 20th-century Europe, with obligatory stops at the major stations: the Bolshevik Revolution, the Spanish Civil War, the Hitler-Stalin pact, World War II, and the cold war. On still another, it is a portrait gallery of individuals and causes around which Communism, and anti-Communism, swirled and surged: the French writer

MARK FALCOFF *is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.*

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André Gide's visit to the Soviet Union; the Moscow trials; the Cambridge spies in Great Britain; and so on.

Finally, it is a study of how Soviet Communism made effective use of fascism, or, rather, anti-fascism to mask its own true nature, and also to command the support and sympathy of men and women of good will in other countries. So useful was this sentiment, indeed, that even after fascist states as such had long since ceased to exist, the *specter* of fascism—now shamelessly said to be located in the United States—continued to be of use as late as the 1970's.

But the originality of this book resides not so much in the subject matter, where after all it has many precursors, as in its rich analytical texture. That, combined with Furet's gift for droll understatement, has yielded a long series of finely-filigreed sketches of events and personalities, casting them in an entirely new light. A man widely read in several languages, Furet clearly knew his way around 20th-century Europe, even unto the dark alleys that figure on no existing map.

If *The Passing of an Illusion* is the history of an idea, what is the content of that idea? It is, in Furet's telling, hatred of the bourgeoisie and of the power of money—a sentiment that he traces to the French revolution but that, in one form or another, has enjoyed an extraordinarily long life ever after. Indeed, as Furet is careful to point out, the same sentiment was amply shared in Europe on the counterrevolutionary Right. Thus, for him, the French Revolution is the *locus classicus* of both Communism *and* fascism. Over time, the anti-bourgeois sentiment became the strongest single emotion in European politics, uniting "the prejudices of the aristocrats, the jealousy of the poor, the contempt of the intellectuals." It was left to the 20th century to disarticulate these feelings into two families of totalitarian expression.

Furet is trenchant on the aftermath of World War I, that period of doubt and disillusionment in which so many political and intellectual developments occurred that proved fateful for the course of the century. One of these was the repudiation by war-weary Europeans of the idea of nationalism, preparing the way for a new notion of "internationalism." Another was the revival of the revolutionary impulse through the triumph of the Bolsheviks in Russia, which affirmed "the role of volition in history and man's invention of himself." Indeed, perhaps the strongest single tool in Lenin's armory was his claim to represent history. So powerful was this claim that, for the first time, citizens of highly advanced societies like Germany and France looked to a profoundly backward and primitive country to point the way to the future.

At first, Furet writes, Moscow tried

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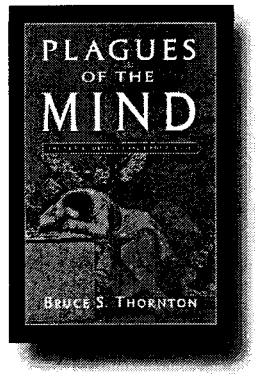

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to export its version of "history" through local Communist *putsches* (Berlin, Hungary, Bavaria) or military conquest (Poland). Failing that, the Comintern turned to political methods: infiltration, espionage, and above all the manipulation of intellectual elites, particularly in England and France. There, in time, just as Lenin predicted, Communism came to enjoy a vast influence.

Furet writes about this influence with particular authority. How, he asks himself, echoing George Orwell, could intelligent people believe things that any ordinary person could easily see were false? His answer: a combination of vanity and necessity. Referring, for example, to the Moscow trials, he writes: "taking the mass of [forced] confessions for granted had less to do with rational conviction, based on a verification of their content, than with a more or less conscious wish to avoid casting doubt on the Soviet Revolution." For, if Trotsky and the others were not guilty of the terrible crimes of which they stood accused by Stalin, then the Left would "no longer [hold] a monopoly on the morally correct."

Soviet victory in World War II increased the "historicity" of the Communist regime in spades. "The war," Furet writes, "allowed the socialist homeland alone to retain the greatest role of the democratic repertory: criticism of democracy in the name of democracy." In Central and Eastern Europe, the expansion of the Soviet empire established "the truth of Communism"; in Western Europe, the same events "reinforced the Communist illusion." The apparent universality of the Communist movement—now ratified by drastic changes in the political map of Europe—"caused a crack in European consciousness that has yet to finish manifesting its effects."

In Furet's estimation, actual Communist influence reached something of an apogee in Western Europe in 1955. The next year saw the Hungarian uprising and Khrushchev's "secret speech" about the crimes of Stalin to the 20th congress of the Communist party. Characteristically, it was the latter, and not the brutal suppression of Hungarian workers, students, and intellectuals, that caused the first great fissure in Western belief. Tito and Mao followed, each with his own form of "revisionism," and worse was to come with the affairs of Pasternak, Sakharov, and Solzhenitsyn.

Still, however shaken in their faith, many in the West continued to believe, if no longer in the inevitability of Communist triumph then in the basic truth of the Communist idea. Indeed, as late as the 1980's, long after most people in the Communist world itself had ceased to place the slightest credence in the Marxist vision, that vision continued to cast its spell on intellectuals in Italy, Spain, and France—and, Furet might have added, in academic circles in Britain and the United States. The final act was the most bizarre: Mikhail Gorbachev, "despised in Russia, was adored by the West right up to the end."

It is a troubling fact, writes Furet summarily, that "the Soviet Union left the scene of history before exhausting the patience of its foreign partisans. It left many orphans throughout the world."

IN MANY ways, *The Passing of an Illusion* reminds one of Hannah Arendt's classic study, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). Both are dense, heavily-argued works built not only upon scholarship but upon a wealth of personal experience in European politics. Both need to be read at least twice—once for the footnotes. And both provide fresh interpretations of historical events that have already received more than their share of attention. In Furet's case, this last virtue is particularly apparent in his treatment of the Spanish Civil War, where he provides perhaps the best single analysis yet written of Soviet intentions on the Iberian peninsula.

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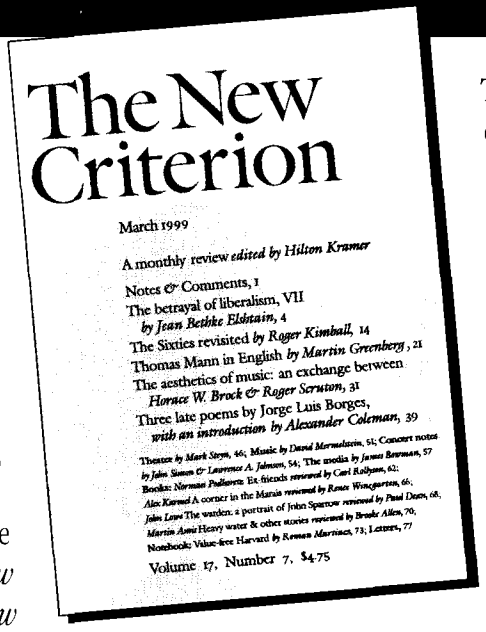
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however, Furet does leave his readers somewhat stranded in the final pages. As a card-carrying French intellectual, even he, it seems, cannot quite part with the belief that an idea, *some* idea, must come forward to replace the discredited Communist illusion. And he makes it quite clear that neither democratic capitalism nor, more generally, Anglo-American pragmatism can hope to pass muster in the contest for men's minds and hearts.

All the greater pity, then, that Furet did not live to comment on the emergence of the latest French version of Marxist-inspired utopia: the 35-hour work week and retirement at age fifty-five for those lucky enough to find and keep their jobs, with mass unemployment as a permanent way of life for everyone else. This, the sum and substance of the economic program put forward by the current socialist government in Paris, is very thin gruel to nourish a country long used to richer ideological fare. But given the human cost exacted around the globe by less adulterated forms of the Communist idea—many of them stamped "Made in France"—perhaps we had best give thanks for small favors.

Of High and Low

American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the 20th Century
by Michael Kammen
Knopf. 320 pp. $30.00

Reviewed by
David Frum

"Value-subtraction" was the term used by American economists to describe the process by which factories in Communist Russia combined leather, glue, and dye into shoes worth less than the raw materials that had gone into them. The Cornell historian Michael Kammen seems to have replicated that depressing achievement in the pages of his latest book. He has chosen a fascinating and important topic, delved deeply into the existing literature, borrowed some interesting ideas, and produced the intellectual equivalent of a pair of Bulgarian evening pumps.

Kammen's book is not, in fact, a history of taste. It is a history of arguments about taste, and especially the argument that erupted in Britain in the middle of the last century and in the United States in the early years of this one over the fate of high culture in an age of mass purchasing power. Would great art and traditional handicrafts be submerged by plinky songs and mass-produced vulgarities? Or could a bourgeois society find some way to preserve the artistic ideal?

In the 1930's, according to Kammen, that argument became subsumed in a slightly different one. Depression-vintage Marxists rejected the old certainty that, culturally speaking, the lower classes were inherently defective. In particular, what was regarded as the authentic culture of working people—sea shanties, Shaker chairs, primitive paintings, quilts, Negro spirituals—suddenly acquired immense prestige. If the Victorian Matthew Arnold had worried whether culture could survive democracy, the Marxists of the 1930's introduced a fresh culprit: capitalism and, specifically, the mass entertainment produced by those shiny new industries of the 1920's—Hollywood, the radio, and the book club. Variants of this Marxist argument, and variants of the variants, survive to the present day.

Kammen's is a familiar story, told in a more than familiar way, with few heroes but all the usual villains. He dutifully condemns as reactionary

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David Frum, *a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, is the author of* How We Got Here, *a history of the 1970's, to be published in February by Basic Books.*

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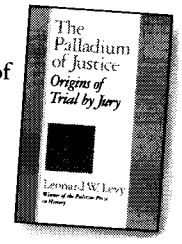

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and snobbish anyone who identifies with the Arnoldian tradition, from Van Wyck Brooks in the 1920's down to Hilton Kramer. Beyond that, however, this is a book crammed with judgments that never add up to a thesis and with facts that never constitute a coherent narrative. Periodic glimmers of an original thought are as hastily stifled as a burglar's flashlight.

What went wrong? Like those Soviet factory managers, Kammen is trapped within a corrupt and authoritarian system—in his case, American academe—whose rules require him to ignore reality for the sake of ideology. And the most salient piece of reality that Kammen neglects or is unable to come to terms with is this: the steady reduction of standards and ambition in *his* sector of American cultural life since 1950.

When Michael Kammen joined the Cornell faculty in 1965, I would wager that not one of his colleagues would have admitted to watching television regularly or to liking rock and roll. Their tastes in art would have conformed to the demanding modernist canon: in painting, Picasso; in sculpture, Calder; in poetry, T.S. Eliot; in architecture, Louis Kahn. The thought of reading one of the commercial novels recommended by the Book-of-the-Month club would have made them shudder, and the suggestion that such books might be added to an undergraduate reading list would have sounded in their ears like the death knell of civilization.

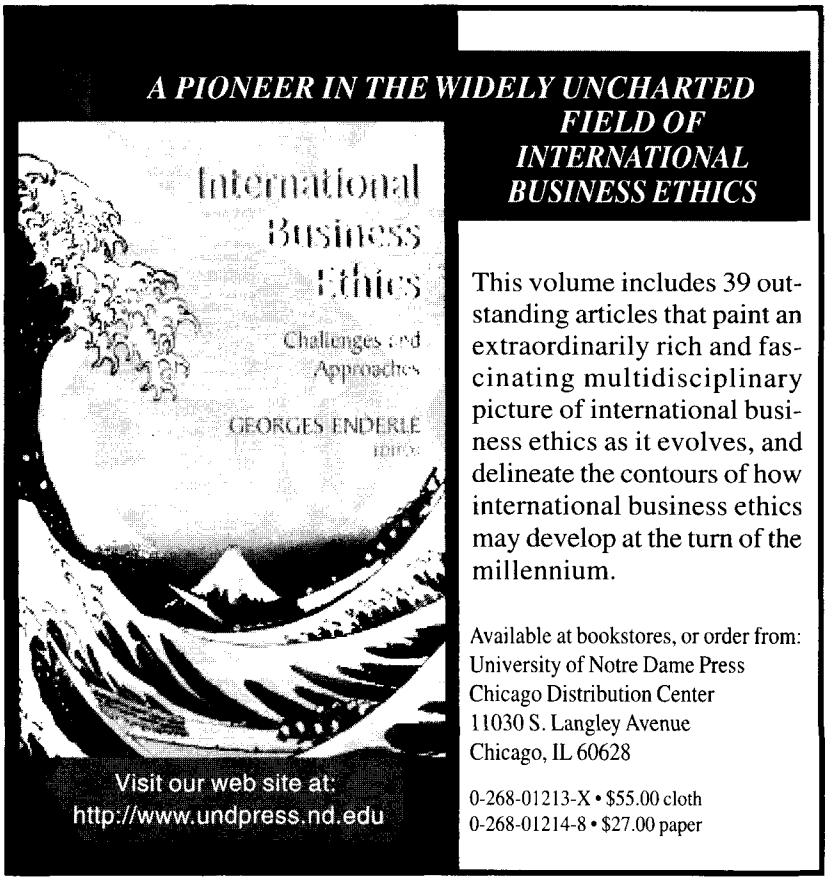
Absurd as the pretensions of yesteryear could be, they still make a poignant contrast to those of today. Which of Kammen's present colleagues would hesitate to confess to watching *Seinfeld*? Or to enjoying the Rolling Stones? The austerity of high modernism has given way to the ironic celebration of Disney World. Professors who in 1965 would have scorned Irving Wallace today not only read but assign Alice Walker.

Kammen comments approvingly that since the 1960's, educated people have discovered they can enjoy popular culture. That is hardly a new development. What is new is something that Kammen is still old-fashioned enough to be shocked by: the academic discipline of cultural studies, which ascribes deep intellectual interest to the once-reviled products of mass culture.

When this field got going 30 years ago, it operated in a spirit of suspicion and hostility: see how those evil corporations delude and manipulate! But over the past three decades, suspicion and hostility gave way, first, to an ironic appreciation of the products of mass culture, and then—as old-style Marxism lost favor serially to the New Left, the counterculture, the deconstructionists, and finally postmodernism—to something very like genuine applause.

Kammen describes how leading cultural-studies professors now "find creativity in the act of consumption and emphasize the concept of 'appropriation': selecting those aspects of media messages that are meaningful to [consumers] and then 'recycling' to suit their own needs." It is this line of reasoning that has brought us doctoral dissertations on the novels of Barbara Cartland and the semiotics of wrestling, and in time—who knows?—to appreciations of Hooters restaurants, Jean-Claude van Damme movies, and the aesthetics of pseudo-Georgian tract mansions.

ALTHOUGH HE repudiates the aesthetic nihilism of the cultural-studies professors, Kammen offers no explanation of his reasons for doing so, preferring instead *ex-cathedra* pronouncements of the "My own position is more like that of Jones than that of Smith" variety. Aware that in failing to appreciate the hermeneu-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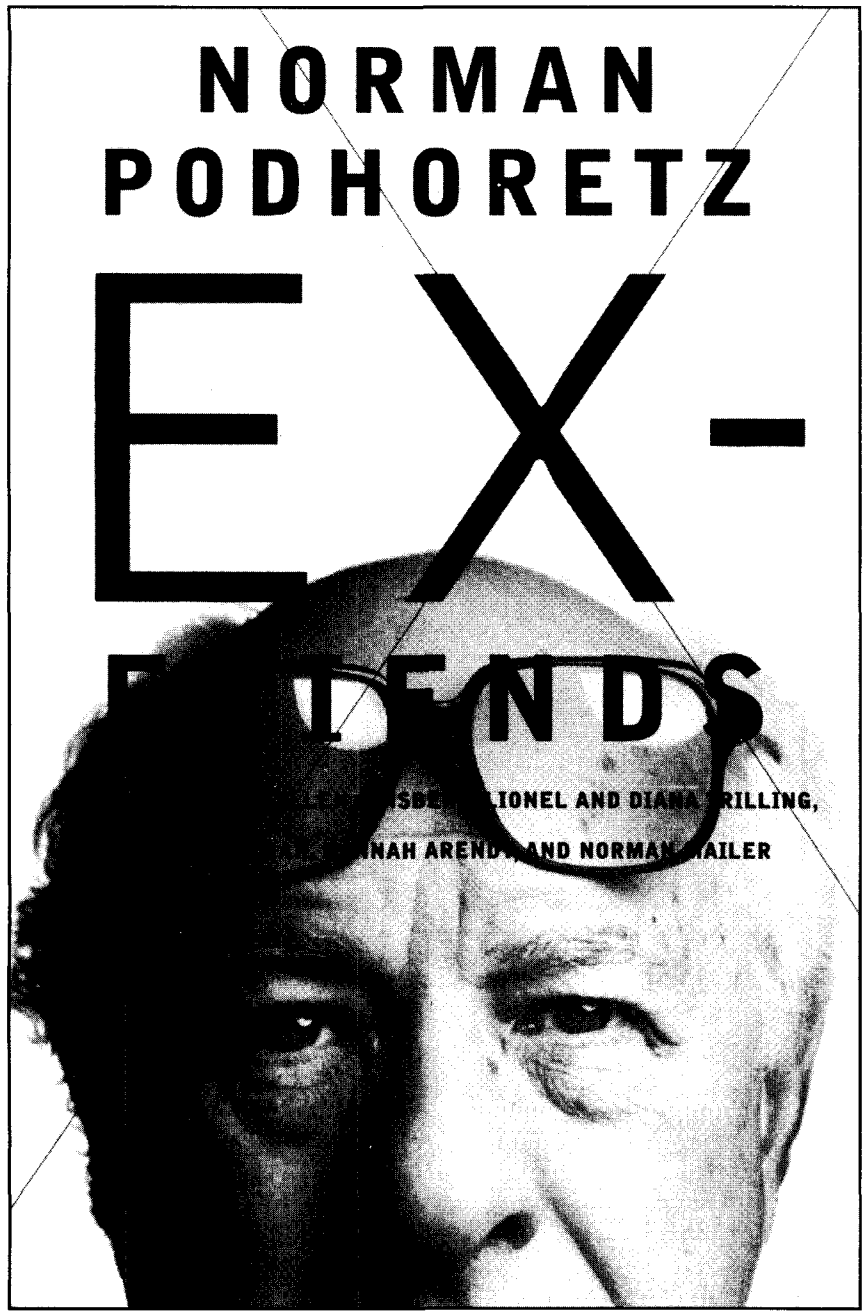

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tics of soap operas he is heading out onto a dangerous limb, he taps his way delicately. But he cannot quite smother his feeling that high culture is listing badly in present-day America, or that the sight grieves him. He even gives signs of glimpsing why it is in so much trouble:

> The democratic ethos that some critics had hoped for in the 1920's and others demanded in the 1930's finally became actualized as a dominant view during the 1960's. It became much less acceptable to demean the taste of ordinary men and women. Parallel with that trend, cultural critics of a populist persuasion began to insist that mass culture had some attractive or redeeming aspects, and, moreover, that intellectuals had no right to tell lowbrows what to like or dislike.

As explanations go, that is not exactly right. Present-day intellectuals are quite willing to tell lowbrows what to like; it is just that they have kicked Milton and Dryden off the list and put Maya Angelou and Sylvia Plath in their places. But Kammen has at least accurately identified contemporary culture-bearers' discomfort with the old notion of high standards, even as he recoils from inching further along that limb. At one point, he notes with incredulity that "as late as 1948, T.S. Eliot continued to assert that culture, by which he really meant high culture, and 'equalitarianism' could not be reconciled." But the reason Eliot continued to assert that proposition was that it was true. There is, after all, no way to vindicate cultural standards without acknowledging (a) that some artists have more talent than others and (b) that some readers, listeners, and spectators have better judgment than others.

Kammen himself is constrained—almost—to admit as much. "The sacralization of culture during the later 19th century," he writes cautiously, "may have been accompanied by an excess of cultural authority—an undemocratic and therefore not a desirable situation. But the marked decline of cultural authority during the later 20th century, a combined consequence of corporate power and cultural democracy, may not be so entirely desirable either." And there he halts, for to go one step beyond "may be" and "not so entirely desirable either" would plunge him off his limb and into a thicket of dangerous taboos that he does not dare to break or even to question.

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